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President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jeremie Bonnelame, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Seychelles.

Mr. Bonnelame (Seychelles) (*spoke in French*): My delegation, Sir, is delighted at seeing you presiding over this session of the General Assembly. We also wish to state the high esteem in which we hold the past President, Mr. Julian Hunte, of Saint Lucia, and for Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The Seychelles, a small island country, is defined by the fact that it belongs to two regions — the Indian Ocean and the African continent — and by the fact that it belongs to several linguistic and cultural areas. Today we wish to be an example of cohabitation of man and nature and an example of unity and cohesion with our people. These two objectives are at the heart of our development plans.

In April of this year, Mr. James Michel succeeded Mr. Albert Rene in the presidency of the Republic through a calm and proper political transition. The new President defends the same development philosophy, taking into account, of course, changes on the world scene, and the economic needs that are inherent in starting a new phase of our development. Thus, the President has assessed our difficulties and the options available to us in different areas of our economy, such as the balance of payments, the debt burden, access under reasonable terms to capital — and in this context we are a middle-income country — access to markets, and so forth.

Together with the Bretton Woods institutions and our other customary partners, we have committed ourselves to a progressive programme of adjustment and of giving new dynamics to our economy. Of course, we are progressing at our own pace, because we remain a vulnerable economy, since we are a small island country, isolated from markets.

I would like to say a few words about the Seychelles' commitment to the international community. First of all, on the question of security, the fight against terrorism, money laundering and drug trafficking are, in the Seychelles, subjects of prevention and deterrence. We are taking action to tackle the causes, the methods and the effects of these criminal actions. The Seychelles has ratified all international conventions on drug trafficking, and we support all United Nations resolutions on the prevention and suppression of the financing of terrorist acts.

We support the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) and the requirements of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

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We have enacted a law this year on the prevention of terrorism, and at the present time we are revising existing legislation on financial institutions and on money laundering. I might add that our offshore sector is also being monitored in the framework of the implementation of a law on the provision of services which was promulgated last year.

We are fully committed to the fight for security and stability. However, it is being done in difficult conditions, because the very questionable criterion of gross domestic product per capita blocks our access to most development assistance programmes.

A small and vulnerable State always attaches more importance to recognition of its own identity and the defence of its stability. We, therefore, unreservedly support the principles and objectives of global peace, security and development that are embodied by the United Nations. We want the Organization to remain extremely active in its initiatives to restore peace, particularly in the Middle East and in Africa, to all areas where conflicts today have become chronic and are steadily worsening.

We hope that the reorganization of the United Nations, which is now under way, will make it possible for it to be repositioned, on the basis of concrete actions and follow-up and monitoring mechanisms. We believe that the Security Council must be open to more permanent and non-permanent members, so that the developed and developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America can contribute to the Council's dynamics.

More than ever, a genuine North-South dialogue is essential to resolve conflicts and to seek shared solutions to shared problems posed by AIDS, poverty, debt and terrorism — all threats that require a joint response and shared responsibilities. This dialogue requires new ethics and a new approach to development, which revitalizes international relations and corrects injustices. It is particularly important to deal with the roots of the debt problem and to adopt energetic measures in order to assist those States whose development is stymied by this burden.

We welcome the exchanges between the Group of Eight and the developing countries. This is a negotiating platform that should have brought about concrete action and implementation of the recommendations of the Millennium Summit, and those of Monterrey, Johannesburg and Doha. It is particularly important that the allocation by the developed countries of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to international development should be seen and accepted as a realistic and fair objective.

We expect the meeting to be held in Mauritius at the beginning of 2005, ten years after the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, to produce an uncompromising assessment of the Programme's implementation and to adopt operational measures and mechanisms. We are counting on the active commitment of our partners for that assessment and its follow-up.

Support and commitment should be expressed in the area of international trade through equitable treatment towards developing countries that have structural weaknesses, such as small island developing States. Such arrangements must take into account the delicate issues of access to markets and trade relations. The goal is to prevent our countries from becoming further marginalized in a system that claims to be in the interest of all. That is why we invite the World Trade Organization to adopt an approach to development that is consistent with the developments of recent years. I am referring to the launch of the Doha round, devoted explicitly to development, and to the assertion of an African voice on sensitive issues such as commodities and raw materials. The new trade relations must also enable developing countries to continue to acquire the means to be more competitive.

Another urgent matter for us, the countries most vulnerable to the consequences of global warming, is the ratification by all developed countries of the Kyoto Protocol. It is the only instrument capable of acting effectively with respect to a danger of concern to all.

We believe that a special fund should be established in the United Nations to help fragile economies confront losses, including loss of income, caused by climate change.

I reaffirm the importance we attach to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) because it is one of the best tools for enabling African countries to manage their own development. We appreciate the commitment of the Group of Eight in this regard through its African Action Plan, and it is our heartfelt hope that NEPAD's development agenda will comprehensively address the specific needs of the eight African island States.

All these questions are of capital importance today. We hope that the British presidency of the Group of Eight in 2005 and the United Nations summit to review the Millennium Development Goals, also scheduled for 2005, will work a very clear rebalancing in favour of our countries.

Seychelles reaffirms its support for the General Assembly, and we thank you, Mr. President, for your personal action. We also thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan. My country is an advocate of the cause of development, which is a fundamental right. That right entails the obligation of political solidarity in the most active sense of the term.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Fathulla Jameel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives.

Mr. Jameel (Maldives): First, let me extend to you, Mr. President, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your election to preside over the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. My delegation has every confidence in your sagacity to guide this session and its deliberations to a fruitful conclusion.

It is also my pleasure to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, for the commendable manner in which he discharged his responsibilities as the President at the fifty-eighth session.

As well, I wish to take this opportunity to compliment the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his diligence in promoting peace and pursuing the noble principles of this Organization. My delegation sincerely wishes him every success in his daunting task.

The unfolding international events bring to the fore the question of multilateralism and the vital role the United Nations has to play in addressing global crises and problems and in promoting a world order based on the rule of law and the collective responsibility of all nations and communities.

The global challenges that we face today are numerous. While goals are set and programmes launched for eradicating poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, fighting HIV/AIDS and protecting the environment, hundreds of innocent lives are lost every day as a result of conflict and civil war.

Terrorism has not been defeated. On the contrary, it is re-emerging in uglier manifestations in the most unexpected places, killing innocent people, including children. The disappointing impasse on global disarmament and the dreadful odds of further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction make us ill at ease and cause us to lose hope for a peaceful world.

We in small States feel more vulnerable to these challenges and threats, as our security is entirely dependent on the prevalence of global security and the observance of the rule of law by all States. Clearly, the concerns of small States cannot be confined only to the issues of the environment, climate change, sea-level rise and sustainable development. The ominous threats that are emerging on the political and security fronts of the contemporary world have far-reaching implications for us as well.

Not too infrequently, we witness small States being victimized by non-State actors such as terrorists, mercenaries, insurrectionary gangs and organized crime networks, whose calculated assaults disrupt socio-economic and political development of small States, endangering peace and security. It would be imprudent to ignore the wider implications of the presence and activities of such perilous actors on international peace and security. Solutions to those threats can only be sought through international cooperation, vigilance and timely action.

It is imperative that the international community takes on the crucial responsibility of protecting the security of small States, as stipulated by General Assembly resolutions 44/51, of 8 December 1989, 46/43, of 9 December 1991, and 49/31, of 9 December 1994. With its global spread and ability to work in collaboration with regional institutions, we see the Organization as the most appropriate body to address such issues.

Terrorism poses grave threats to regional as well as international peace and security. The train bombings in Madrid; car bombings and terrorist attacks in Iraq, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia; and, most recently, the hostage-taking tragedy in a Russian school, are all grim reminders of the particularly insidious nature of terrorism. I am sure that I echo the unanimity of the international community in reiterating that the war against terrorism should continue to remain a principal priority on the international agenda. My Government

believes that early adoption of the proposed international convention on terrorism would be a crucial step in effectively combating that dreadful menace.

Expanding globalization and increasing trade liberalization, contrary to the hopes for a healthier global market, have had a distressing price tag for small economies, especially for small island economies such as the Maldives. Limited natural resources and the narrow economic base of small island economies severely restrict their scope for diversification and their ability to attract foreign investment. Those disadvantages call for special considerations, including a level of preferential treatment, on an exceptional basis, to ensure the sustainable development of small island developing States.

While the Maldives is beset by the entire range of economic problems inherent to small island developing States, the recommendation by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) to graduate us from the list of least developed countries has compounded the challenges to our development. We do take pride in our achievements in the social and economic sectors during the last two decades. However, we fear that graduation may cause enormous and irreparable damage to our economy, in the absence of a suitable mechanism to ensure sustained socio-economic development. In that context, we welcome the recommendation of the CDP and the decision of the Economic and Social Council earlier this year indicating the need to formulate smooth transition strategies for least developed countries prior to their graduation.

We support in particular the recommendation to decide post-graduation transition arrangements on a case-by-case basis and to establish ad hoc country advisory groups to help formulate those arrangements. We strongly feel that it is important for the Economic and Social Council to formally endorse the arrangements proposed by the ad hoc country advisory groups while mandating the CDP with the task of monitoring the progress of newly graduated countries for any disruptions in their development.

Allow me, at this juncture, to register our sincere gratitude and appreciation to our development partners and the members of the Group of 77, the Group of Least Developed Countries and the Bureau and members of the Economic and Social Council for the understanding and the care with which they are proceeding on this crucial and important issue.

The state of the global environment is as depressing as ever. Statistical information and projections are alarming and disturbing, not only to small island developing States but also to the entire international community. Those figures and predictions reveal the severity of environmental problems and the potential threats to human existence unless swift remedial measures are implemented.

The frequency with which we have been witnessing natural disasters such as hurricanes and cyclones around the world demonstrates the urgent need to tackle environmental issues on a global scale. Many small island developing States suffer disproportionately from such hazards, underscoring the vulnerability of small island developing States in that regard. As we recently witnessed in Grenada, a single hurricane can lay waste to decades-long developmental progress in a matter of a few hours.

We will soon be meeting in Mauritius to review the progress made over the past decade in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States. If we are to make the forthcoming meeting in Mauritius a success, we need to muster the necessary political will to channel resources and to ensure the comprehensive realization of the objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action.

The complexity and magnitude of ever-developing global challenges demand that a reformed United Nations be assigned the central role in dealing with them. While those reforms should cover the entire United Nations system and its bodies, the focus is once again justly being drawn to the urgency of the need to restructure the Security Council, making the Council more reflective of the realities of the present-day world and more representative of the capacity and commitment of Member States to contribute to international peace and security. It is disappointing, though, that no common view has emerged on that issue. We feel that we should go ahead with the enlargement of the Security Council, both in the permanent and non-permanent categories and including in that enlargement countries such as Japan and other Member States that have the capacity and the commitment to serve as permanent members and that

would represent the wider membership of the present-day United Nations.

The international treaty regime has to be expanded and strengthened so that emerging problems can be dealt with more effectively. We feel that that task should be a priority in enforcing the principles for which the United Nations stands and the values of peace, security, justice, equality, human rights, democracy and rules-based international order that it has advocated. In that context, we applaud the remarks made by the Secretary-General at the opening meeting of the General Assembly, and wish to express our support for his efforts to reform the United Nations system.

The rapid socio-economic development attained by the Maldives in the past two and a half decades is in no small part grounded in the political stability that we have enjoyed during that period. To emphasize further the need to promote and sustain the values of democracy and respect for human rights, President Gayoom proposed a sweeping agenda for political reform in early June of this year. The Government remains firmly committed to carry out the reform agenda, which has been welcomed and supported by both the people of the country and its friends in the international community. A special people's assembly was convened, as required by the Constitution, and was charged with the task of debating reforms to the current Constitution proposed by the Government and civil society.

We seek the support and assistance of our friends in the international community in our pursuit of that unprecedented reform agenda. The solidarity of the international community at this crucial hour of need would reinforce our resolve and help us move ahead with the reform agenda with increased veracity and diligence.

My Government is also committed to respecting and observing human rights through adherence to relevant international conventions. In that regard, I am pleased to announce that the Maldives will this week sign a framework agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross. We will also keep under consideration the signing of other important instruments, such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Before concluding, I should like to reaffirm our commitment to the principles enshrined in the Charter. My country believes this Organization to be the best suited to working for the betterment of humanity and the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Frederick Mitchell, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Public Service of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas): It is my honour to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of the Prime Minister, the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, of our sister Caribbean State of Saint Lucia, for his outstanding leadership during the fifty-eighth session. His legacy is one of which we in the Caribbean can be proud, and we wish him well in his future endeavours.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his stalwart defence of multilateralism and the rule of law.

Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne have ravaged the Caribbean islands and parts of the United States. Lives were lost in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Cuba, the United States and the Bahamas. The damage to homes and infrastructure and the interruption to normal life and commerce compel us to stress the need for immediate and dramatic measures to ensure reconstruction and rehabilitation. What has been on offer to the region so far is woefully inadequate.

Our country's northern islands — Grand Bahama and Abaco — received double hits. First, Hurricane Frances struck on 13 September, leaving hundreds without food, water, homes and power. Then came Jeanne, two weeks later, over the same islands that were hit by Frances, further exacerbating the problems. The Bahamas has many islands and, fortunately for us, tourism facilities remain open in the capital, Nassau, and facilities on other islands in the chain will be operational shortly. That, unfortunately, will not be the case in Grenada.

Regional heads have called for an international donor conference to meet the needs of all countries adversely affected by the hurricanes. The Bahamas supports such a conference. We hope that, as a result of that conference, if not before, there will be a

moratorium on Grenada's debt repayment. We also recommend that a regional disaster relief fund be established to support the reconstruction effort.

The word "hurricane" comes from a word first used by the indigenous people of the Caribbean region, the Arawaks. That pre-Columbian civilization must have seen the phenomenon so often that it invented the word for it. That means it has been around for some time, and it is likely to be with us for some time to come. It behooves us, therefore, to understand the phenomenon that we are facing, including its connection — if any — to climate change, which low-lying States have been warning about for years. These facts also demand that our own societies should better plan for the eventualities that have been, and that we know are going to continue to be, a part of our lives. We cannot let lack of planning be a possible cause of the undermining of our sovereignty in this way.

The world is soon wary and weary; the phenomenon of donor fatigue sets in. And we lose our dignity if we cannot be seen to help ourselves. But if, as the scientific evidence suggests, the hurricanes that we now experience are related to climate change, it is clear that we cannot defend ourselves alone. A major shift on the part of the most active polluting countries is required. They must shift gears if the people in small island developing States are going to survive. It is a moral imperative for them to shift gears.

In this regard, the Bahamas welcomes the preliminary moves by the Government of Britain, as well as the Governments of Japan and of Russia, towards putting climate change closer to the top of the agenda. We urge them to continue to use their influence on their friends to cause a major shift in attitude. The implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted at the Global Conference in Barbados in 1994, becomes even more urgent. The follow-up meeting on this issue in Mauritius in January 2005 now takes on even greater significance.

In this context, I would also like to highlight the region's efforts to designate the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. We also reiterate our grave concern about the serious threat posed to the security and economic development of Caribbean countries by the trans-shipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea. We continue to call on States involved in trans-shipment to desist from that practice.

The scenes of death and destruction as a result of the hurricane that affected Haiti in recent days reminded us of the political turmoil that that country has endured during the past year. The Bahamas extends its deepest condolences to the Haitian nation for the tremendous and sad loss of life. The year, which began with so much hope with the celebration of the deeds of Toussaint L'Ouverture and the two hundredth anniversary of independence on 1 January, fell quickly into the abyss of despair on the fateful evenings of 28 and 29 February. No one will ever know what truly happened on that night as an elected President left his country with armed rebels nipping at his heels, but it filled the entire Caribbean with sadness. It raised the spectre of mistrust of friends. That feeling has still not died, but we must soldier on if we are to help the people of Haiti achieve democracy, economic uplift and a just and fair society.

The Bahamas stands ready to do what it can to assist the people of Haiti in these developments. Haiti sits 90 miles from our southern shores, and each year thousands of migrants looking for a better way of life seek to enter the Bahamas illegally from Haiti. We have practical reasons, therefore, to ensure that justice and democracy prevail in Haiti. We echo the call of all countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for the return to democratic order in Haiti, and we pledge to help.

We regret the failure of the Security Council to act in a timely fashion when Haiti's friends begged for the authority to intervene or to authorize an intervention. Perhaps that failure heralds the need for the Council's reform. The Bahamas supports such reform efforts and awaits the report of the High-Level Panel appointed by the Secretary-General. But the United Nations must never stop trying to address the issues that face Haiti, because there is a moral imperative to eliminate hunger, poverty, disease and discrimination. In this regard, we welcome the work of President Lula da Silva of Brazil and President Chirac of France, Pope John Paul and other world leaders in seeking to ensure that the moral imperatives to which we have referred are placed at the forefront of the world's agenda. We must never forget what Haiti has done for our region and for the world.

While the fight against those who would subvert our democratic values by attacks on civilian and military targets remains high on our agenda, we must not allow the drums of war to drown out the calls of the world's poor and disenfranchized. In 2000, we gave ourselves a set of goals with respect to development with a human face, and we must do all that we can to achieve them. The Bahamas has committed itself to the fight. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the survivors of all who have lost their lives in such senseless attacks, particularly in the United States, Kenya, Spain, Tanzania and Indonesia. But we also admonish all States that terrorism cannot be an excuse to limit freedom and to dispense with the very liberties that we are trying to defend and that form the foundations of free and democratic societies.

All States ought to act with caution in putting in place rules and regulations for travel, lest the denial of those rights cannot be defended by logic or objectivity. That is especially so where we note that developed countries argue in favour of free trade and globalization but deny the benefits of that trade to legitimate travellers by administrative discrimination and bureaucratic procedures and delay. The appeal therefore is to bring some sense of balance, before we lose the very thing we seek to save.

As part of this overall process of reflection, my delegation welcomes the high-level reviews planned for 2005 of our commitments with respect to social development and the advancement of women. We must ensure that we undertake an unflinching examination of the progress made in achieving the priority goals of the Copenhagen Programme of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action to determine how far we have come and what remains to be done. It is critical that the outcomes of the respective appraisals will acknowledge the gaps in implementation and allow States and the international community as a whole to move forward and achieve the timely and effective implementation of the commitments undertaken at Copenhagen, Beijing and beyond. We must also make certain that the results of our deliberations feed constructively and synergistically into the high-level event in September 2005, so as to ensure that no ground is left uncovered.

HIV/AIDS continues to threaten to undermine decades and centuries of progress in health care and in developing healthy populations that facilitate economic growth throughout the world. The Bahamas is a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean region. We urge the continued and unrelenting fight against the disease, to rescue the world's developing nations from the clutches of that scourge. It must take all of the political will and financial power of the world's nations to ensure that the scourge is brought under control and then eliminated.

In that context, the Bahamas welcomes the recent grant to the Pan-Caribbean Partnership from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. That grant will provide a much-needed infusion of resources for prevention, care and treatment programmes. The Bahamas also welcomes the convening of the June 2005 high-level meeting to review the progress achieved in realizing the commitments set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. The Bahamas acknowledges the pledge made by the United States to set aside $15 billion to fight HIV/AIDS throughout the world, including in Haiti and Guyana in the Caribbean region.

It is an inescapable fact that there can be no meaningful social or economic development without security. For many of us in the Caribbean in particular, that security is being undermined by the activities of those trafficking in illicit drugs, illegal weapons and undocumented aliens. By virtue of its geographical location, the Bahamas is an unwitting transit point for such illegal activities. In the case of illicit drugs, the Bahamas is neither a producer nor the final destination for them. However, as a trans-shipment point, the Bahamas, as do other transit countries, experiences the illegal activities associated with that trade. Those activities tend to undermine the economic and social fabric of our nations.

We therefore welcomed the convening in June 2004 of the first session of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, some of the tools undermining our safety and security and our economic and social fabric. That meeting was a small, but important, first step in reaching agreement on an instrument on tracing, to enable States affected by that illicit trade to more effectively identify lines of supply, put measures in place to interdict existing lines and prevent new ones, and to cooperate with other States at the bilateral, regional and international levels. At the same time, we continue to call on developed countries to take the same extraordinary measures they use in seeking to stop drug trafficking into their countries to

stop illegal small arms from reaching our shores from their countries.

The Bahamas joins with other countries of the Caribbean Community in voicing our concern about the persistent attempts on the part of some of the developed world's un-elected multilateral bodies to exclude developing countries from decision-making and norm-setting processes, thereby undermining our economies. Chief among those is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The decisions of those bodies are not friendly acts. We repeat the call we made last year about the need for a global forum to deal with those unfair practices.

We welcome the work that has been done in the Economic and Social Council to redress the imbalance in favour of a level playing field. The arrangements for dealing with international tax matters in particular are a source of concern. We pledge to continue to work with the United Nations towards establishing a world body that will deal with those matters in a fair and balanced way.

Yesterday I was in our capital city, Nassau, in the Bahamas, where we marked 275 years of continuous representative, parliamentary democracy. This, then, is a propitious time to reaffirm the commitment of the Bahamas to the principles enshrined in the Charter of this great Organization, which will stand as a guiding beacon as we continue to chart a rocky, yet crucial, course towards peace, security and sustainable development for all the world's inhabitants. While progress may seem meagre, we must not be swayed from our course and we must remain confident that the benefits of our activities and efforts will redound to future generations. I say again that, now more than ever, the world needs the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Talbak Nazarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Nazarov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): We all pinned great hopes on the advent of the twenty-first century with regard to a more stable and secure world and sustainable development for humanity. We were all eager to expand the positive achievements of the twentieth century, which witnessed rapid technological and social progress, the beginning of the space age, the advancement of democracy and the globalization of the planet. We all wanted to leave behind the destructive impact on human history of two world wars, continued blood conflicts, millions of refugees, poverty and the destitution common in most countries of the world.

It had seemed that, at this junction of centuries and millennia, humanity would rediscover and appreciate more deeply the value of a world without wars or violence and the significance of solidarity and mutual understanding, of true human rights and respect of the views of others. Now, however, it has become clear that it is impossible to comprehend the dynamics of global development or to find adequate answers to modern challenges without the United Nations as a leader.

The impression had been that, in the new century, our civilization would embark on the path towards a global society where harmony would prevail over hatred and stability put an end to suspicion — a society where the agreed rules of conduct set out in international law, binding for all, would stand in the way of isolationism and separatism; where all internationally relevant issues, including the most urgent ones, would be resolved at the negotiating table; and where the use of force would not be the rule but, rather, the exception, and only when sanctioned by collective decisions of a capable and representative Security Council.

Unfortunately, the twenty-first century has brought more new and menacing challenges than solutions to the numerous problems faced by humankind. The number of wars and military conflicts has not diminished but increased. The peaceful resolution of the inter-Tajik conflict achieved under United Nations auspices is more the exception than the rule in the context of the efforts to achieve peace undertaken by the United Nations.

The world's peoples increasingly feel that the world is in a state of permanent war rather than working towards development. Every day we hear about the dangers of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the struggle against international terrorism. These are urgent problems, and we cannot but be concerned about them since weapons of mass destruction are capable of destroying hundreds of thousands of human lives, while acts of terror can destabilize entire countries.

For those reasons, we are firmly resolved to transform Central Asia into a region free of nuclear weapons. The recent tragic events in the town of Beslan, in the Russian Federation, are clear evidence

that the forces of international terrorism are, day by day, becoming more daring and continue to challenge the whole of humankind.

Tajikistan resolutely condemns the acts of violence perpetrated against defenceless women and children in North Ossetia and appeals to the international community to undertake urgent collective measures to combat this scourge of the twenty-first century.

It is comforting that the international solidarity demonstrated in the struggle against such a bloodthirsty and treacherous enemy as terrorism is gaining in strength. Tajikistan has been actively waging, at the regional and international levels, a multifaceted struggle against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.

At the same time, in order to definitively put an end to terrorism, it is very important to reach a universal understanding of its nature and manifestations in order to eliminate any obstacles that stand in the way of the development and adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

While we can rightly be proud of having created, within a short period of time, a united anti-terrorist coalition of States, unfortunately we cannot say that we have achieved the same degree of solidarity in the fight against poverty and destitution.

For decades, States with low levels of income have not been able to free themselves from their destructive debt burden so as to be able to enjoy the advantages of civilization. For instance, Tajikistan, which lived through a civil conflict, continues to face urgent economic and social problems, despite having made some economic progress. Eighty per cent of the population of Tajikistan still lives below the poverty line. Because of the lack of access to the sea, many regions of our country are cut off from the outside world, which results in our paying higher prices for imported goods and increased transit fees. Forty per cent of all budget revenues go to servicing external debt, which limits the Government's capacity to meet the urgent needs of the population.

Writing off a portion of the accumulated debt would make it possible for those countries to invest in education, health care and environmental protection, and, in the case of Tajikistan, could be helpful in rehabilitating the social sphere, which has suffered as a result of the civil conflict and natural disasters. However, the idea of exchanging debt for sustainable development has not yet garnered solid support among creditors. In that area, we still encounter inertia and a lack of political will.

It is clear to us that the resolution of political issues, including those related to international security, depends, to a great extent, on social and economic development and on the achievement by all countries of the Millennium Goals.

In a globalized world, achieving the Millennium Goals will require the utmost solidarity as well as interaction among the international community as a whole, with the United Nations as a leading coordinator, in its capacity as the most universal and representative international Organization.

The key to success lies in developing a common and comprehensive approach to addressing poverty-related issues, enhancing the means available as well as seeking innovative ways of securing financing for development, eliminating ecological threats, addressing demographic problems, ensuring an equitable international finance and trade system, and dealing with the aftermath of natural disasters. Failing that, the situation will remain the same: a quarter of the world's population will continue to prosper, using more than half of the world's resources, while the majority of the world's population, finding themselves marginalized, will remain mere observers of global economic development.

The ever-increasing severity of these problems makes them global threats to international peace and security. For that reason, we support the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his efforts to restore the balance of priorities on the agenda of the international community.

The international community should also strive to ensure maximum coordination of the actions taken at the global level in terms of monetary, financial and international trade policies. In that connection, it is important to strengthen the role of the United Nations as the key force for political mobilization in those areas. That requires, on the basis of the Monterrey consensus, a further reinforcement of the interaction among the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, which Tajikistan hopes to join in the near future.

The issues of economic rehabilitation, poverty eradication, improved living standards for the population and long-term sustainable development are among the top priorities for Tajikistan, as an economy in transition.

At the same time, for a number of reasons, Tajikistan still needs the assistance of the international community in supporting national efforts to ensure long-term sustainable development in the country. We appreciate the continued efforts of the donor countries and United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and others to assist vulnerable segments of the population, as well as their support in the ongoing transition to a socially oriented market economy.

Given our own experience, we support the priority attention given by the United Nations to increasing the effectiveness of the assistance rendered to countries in post-conflict situations and to receiving feedback in that area. There is no doubt that the United Nations is the key player in providing timely and coordinated responses to post-conflict situations.

The success of the United Nations in this area depends to a great extent on a qualitative interaction with host Governments in the area of reinforcing national potential, the introduction of effective instruments and mechanisms for the coordination and mobilization of resources, and increased interaction with the Bretton-Woods institutions in the context of a joint assessment of their needs and specific project activities.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that one of the lessons learned from the peaceful settlement of the inter-Tajik conflict is the need for donor countries to be active not only during the crisis but also in the post-conflict period. I am convinced that strengthening the foundation of peace and stability in countries living through conflict requires not only humanitarian assistance but also actual help in addressing economic problems and support for countries' efforts to create a dynamic and stable economy. As a rule, these kinds of investments, within the framework of a peaceful process, turn out to be instrumental in strengthening young democracies born out of conflict. There is no doubt that the parliamentary elections to be held in Tajikistan in early 2005 will prove once again the vitality and irreversible nature of the peace process in Tajikistan and the robustness of the country's democratic institutions.

Achieving ecologically sustainable development on the global, regional and national levels remains an issue of top priority. Tajikistan intends to continue to contribute to the implementation of the relevant decisions of Johannesburg and other international forums. The 2005-2015 International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", to be launched on 22 March 2005, was initiated by our country and is expected to combine efforts undertaken by Governments, the United Nations, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. These efforts are aimed at identifying effective ways of achieving the internationally agreed goals in the area of fresh water resources, developing strategies, programmes and laws to protect water environments and increasing investment and voluntary donor contributions, two activities associated with ensuring access to fresh water to all persons in need. We ask the Governments of all countries, as well as United Nations agencies, to undertake practical activities within this decade. This is the key to success, and it will require a great deal of work.

In some regions of the world, the international community is faced not only with the problem of conflicts and wars that interfere with long-term development, but also with illicit drug trafficking, which poses a threat to civil society. We cannot help being concerned with the fact that global demand for prohibited drugs is not decreasing. For instance, the volume of criminal transit of narcotics via Tajikistan constitutes a serious threat to our social, political and economic stability as well as to the security of the region as a whole. Afghanistan remains a major supplier of narcotics. Their production this year has set a record.

The President of Tajikistan, Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, regards the struggle against illicit drugs as one of the top priorities for our country. Thanks to the cooperation with the United Nations and interaction within Shanghai Cooperation Organization of the last five years, Tajikistan has become one of the leading countries in the world in terms of narcotics interdiction. Over this period, the law enforcement bodies of Tajikistan and the Russian border guards have confiscated about 40 tons of narcotics, with heroin constituting more than half of this total. As a result, millions of dollars have been removed from

circulation and hundreds of thousands of people the world over have been saved from narcotics dependency.

According to Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Tajikistan sets a good example for other countries as to how one can successfully struggle against drugs. The achievements of Tajikistan in this area are considered as a good basis for strengthening the struggle against the narcotics threat, but we are combating the results rather than the roots of the problem.

In autumn 2005, heads of State and Government will meet in this General Assembly Hall to discuss progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We attach great importance to this event, which coincides with the sixtieth anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations. We expect this forthcoming event to give the necessary political impetus to the international community in its progress towards the achievement through combined efforts of the Millennium Development Goals in the interest of a more stable, just and prosperous world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Maria Levens, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

Mrs. Levens (Suriname): On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Suriname, I extend to you my sincere congratulations on your unanimous election to guide the work of this fifty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly. We are convinced that the wealth of diplomatic experience and expertise you bring to this body will assist you in a meaningful way during your presidency. I can assure you that the Government of the Republic of Suriname and its Permanent Mission stand ready to cooperate with you in the coming months. It also gives me great pleasure to salute your predecessor, the President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, a fellow Caribbean national. Mr. Hunte's sterling and dedicated leadership has made all of us, especially those from the Caribbean region, proud. To Secretary-General Kofi Annan we offer our continued support. We acknowledge the importance of his remarks at the start of the General Assembly and share his views regarding the application of the rule of law, both domestically and internationally, as the guiding principle in strengthening and preserving democracy, defending and promoting human rights and establishing peace.

We are keenly aware of the importance of the United Nations, as the supreme multilateral institution, in advancing multilateral diplomacy for the benefit of humanity in a world in which we continue to struggle to achieve peace, security and prosperity. The international community expressed some time ago the need for a more effective and efficient Organization that would be better able to address the many chalienges our world faces today.

Under the inspiring leadership of your predecessor, Mr. President, the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly achieved the reordering of the agenda of the General Assembly aimed at its further rationalization and at facilitating the uniform and coherent discussion of development issues in the plenary and the main committees of the General Assembly. We must keep that powerful momentum for change alive and take it a step further. We must ensure that we do not regress from the results achieved and ensure that there is continued progress in these areas.

The reform of the United Nations Security Council remains one of the vital objectives of the restructuring efforts of the Organization. In our view, a restructured Council must be a reflection of the membership of the Organization, improving its level of transparency and making it more democratic. The Council must be more inclusive and comprehensive in its functioning, as security matters, because of their multidimensional nature, affect the life and livelihood of each and every one of us. The membership of a restructured Council and, equally, its current composition must ensure that the Council upholds the fundamental principles of the Charter while retaining its main focus: the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is very disturbing to observe that, despite intensive diplomatic and political undertakings, peace and tranquillity in several regions of the world are still a major concern and challenge that threaten the democratic underpinnings of society. The time may be opportune for the United Nations to spearhead the process of involving relevant interest groups and civil society at large in the different countries of a particular region to assist in the establishment of sustained peace in that region.

We express our concern about the ongoing political difficulties in the Middle East and in Africa, resulting in violence and the displacement of many persons.

The political crises in our own hemisphere — especially in Venezuela and Haiti — have attracted much attention and have been the subject of many efforts by the United Nations and the Organization of American States. We look forward to continuing and sustainable political stability in Venezuela which, we hope, will promote an environment of normalcy and progress.

The political situation in our sister nation, the Republic of Haiti, remains of great concern. Since its inception as the first black independent republic, Haiti has become the symbol of struggle and hardship, but also of courage, survival and solidarity. That long-battered country and its population need more profound, constructive and long-term assistance to improve the living conditions of the people of Haiti.

Earlier, I referred briefly to the multidimensional nature of security and the need to give due attention to social, economic and environmental threats. In recent weeks, the Caribbean region, which is home to economies that are already vulnerable, has felt the force of nature in the most extreme manner. While several countries have been battered — such as Jamaica, the Bahamas, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and several other islands — one country in particular has been severely damaged: Grenada. I join all the other nations that have already done so in calling for immediate as well as long-term financial and technical assistance for the Government and people of Grenada. The Government of Suriname offers it condolences to the families of the victims in Caribbean countries, as well as in affected states of the United States of America, where various hurricanes in recent weeks have caused considerable damage and loss of life.

Another global threat that has an impact on every country emanates from the activities of terrorists, terrorist groups and State-sponsored terrorism. The world will never forget the images of horrifying terrorist acts such as the one that took place in Beslan this year, where hundreds of persons, mostly children, lost their lives. The Government of Suriname remains committed to the fight against terrorism. We also continue to believe that an effective and successful battle can be waged through a comprehensive approach.

The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which was established by the Secretary-General with a view to receiving a global report on international security, is a result of the renewed interest in international security concerns. We hope that that review will be one that will produce result-oriented objectives and measures.

Suriname believes that development issues such as the eradication of poverty and hunger and the protection of the environment are among the extremely important aspects to be addressed if one wishes to obtain lasting and comprehensive security, which encompasses, inter alia, military, political, environmental, economic and social developmental aspects.

Up to the present day, globalization has not delivered on the promise of vast development opportunities on a global scale. While we have to acknowledge that globalization has created opportunities, those opportunities have been restricted to just a few societies. The opportunities that arise from development in the world today are, unfortunately, not within the reach of all humankind. The current world order is still characterized by economic disparities, unequal trade regimes, income inequalities between and within countries, social injustice and declining opportunities for hundreds of millions. Globalization can only become a real option for economic development if it becomes all-inclusive and if we give it a human face by paying particular attention to the negative impact it has on social progress.

Suriname continues to believe that the United Nations must regain its importance in the areas of global development, if we want to be successful in our efforts to eradicate poverty, achieve social and economic development and stem the spread of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

The meeting on the subject of poverty organized by the Government of Brazil under the auspices of the United Nations points to a common awareness of the fact that the global development agenda must be advanced and that, therefore, the international community must move from political will to action and from commitments to implementation, granting humanity as a whole an opportunity to develop.

The upcoming 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action will provide small island developing States with a momentous opportunity to promote their priority interests and concerns for the next phase of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. While we anticipate that that comprehensive review will result in concrete proposals to advance the implementation process, we also expect that the review exercise will take place in a spirit of partnership. The upcoming meeting in Mauritius should therefore generate greatly needed support, genuine commitment and, moreover, the political will of all partners in the process of furthering the cause of achieving true benefits and progress for the many people living in small island developing States.

In conclusion, I want to stress the need for the United Nations to become more effective in dealing with the current challenges in terms of terrorism and security. At the same time, we must remain vigilant in defending and strengthening democracy and democratic values and institutions, so as to create a stable political and social environment for progress and sustainable development. We also need to continue, and intensify, our battle against HIV/AIDS, illegal drug trafficking and crime. Although globalization has opened up opportunities, it is also our collective responsibility to ensure that international trade liberalization does not result in social and economic marginalization, especially of smaller and vulnerable economies.

To achieve those objectives, the United Nations has to continue its restructuring process and become not only the principal global platform in theory, but also demonstrate its capabilities to act in practice. It is in that context that my Government considers the United Nations the most appropriate global multilateral institution for the advancement of the living standards of humankind as a whole and for achieving sustainable global peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Carlos Morales Troncoso, Secretary of State for Foreign Relations of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Morales Troncoso (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour for me today to address the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, on behalf of the Government of Leonel Fernández and of the people of the Dominican Republic, in this forum devoted to the maintenance of peace and the promotion of development and harmony among peoples. Once again, we are speaking out on the most delicate and important issues on the international agenda so that we can join forces in the search for viable solutions to the problems that affect us all.

I extend my sincerest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. We are confident that you will steer our work along the path of peace and security for the good of mankind. We also underscore the important work accomplished by the outgoing President, Mr. Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia.

The Dominican Republic has been struck by a force of nature that has left death and destruction in its wake in various parts of the country. The rain and the wind of Hurricane Jeanne had severe consequences for the eastern part of our country, destroying homes, means of communication, bridges, crops and tourist infrastructure, at a time when the Dominican Republic had been making increasing efforts to jumpstart its economy. We take this opportunity to express our thanks for the international community's solidarity in these difficult times for the Dominican Republic. I would also like to express my deepest thanks to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has expressed solidarity with our country and with Haiti in the context of this natural disaster.

The fact of globalization steadily deepens relations among our countries, challenging our capacity to take advantage of the opportunities that globalization offers, as well as our capacity to limit its negative impact. Together with the contradictory and complex processes of integration and disintegration, our countries still hope that the benefits of globalization will create conditions making it possible to overcome poverty and attain a good life.

A tragic event that occurred in this city of New York on 11 September 2001 changed the destiny of humankind in a matter of minutes, and made the world increasingly dangerous and insecure. The promise of lasting peace presaged by the end of the cold war was destroyed by terrorist actions — actions which were condemned by all humankind and which have unleashed a steady escalation of violence that has turned the world into a place of uncertainty.

We must spare no effort to rid humankind of the threat of terrorism. We condemn terrorist acts in all

their forms and manifestations, whatever their source and whomever may be affected, and want to underscore the importance of international cooperation in the fight against that scourge, which should always be prosecuted in strict compliance with international law, and, in particular, with human rights and international humanitarian law.

The Dominican Republic is founded on an unconditional commitment to the norms and principles of international law, and particularly those that relate to the peaceful settlement of disputes, the condemnation of the use of force, compliance in good faith with international treaties and the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations and its deliberative bodies, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Commission on Human Rights.

We reaffirm the view to which countries committed themselves in May 2004 at the third Summit Conference of Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and of the European Union, as set out in paragraph 8 of the Declaration of Guadalajara:

> "[A]n effective multilateral system, based on international law, supported by strong international institutions and with the United Nations at its centre, is essential for achieving peace and international security, sustainable development and social progress."

However, in order to achieve those objectives we must streamline, modernize and reform the entire multilateral international system, a process that States must support through respect for and compliance with the resolutions adopted, without neglecting genuine and effective equitable regional participation.

Multilateralism is one of the main pillars of the foreign policy of the Dominican Republic, as can be seen by our participation and cooperation in all international forums. For that reason, we join those nations that call for a thorough reform of the United Nations system, with a view to enhancing its democratization and making it a more effective instrument for States Members. That reform must be geared, first of all, towards strengthening the General Assembly, the most important body of the Organization, and the Security Council, in which there is unequal geographical representation. We reiterate yet again the suggestion that has been made for several years now: the Security Council should be expanded so that Asia, Africa and Latin America can have two permanent members, and the number of non-permanent seats should be increased in order to democraticize the decision-making mechanism of that forum for peace. Those reforms are necessary to make the multilateral system more agile and effective, so that it may more successfully confront global threats and challenges.

I would like to echo the commitment undertaken by the heads of State or Government who met in Santo Domingo in August and adopted the Declaration of Santo Domingo 2004, in which we agreed that:

> "[t]he fight against poverty is essential to the consolidation of democracy. In that regard, it is necessary to formulate and implement public policies aimed at strengthening economic growth and an equitable distribution of national income and wealth."

As we are all aware, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has reported that the richest 20 per cent of Latin America's population receives 54 per cent of national income, whereas the poorest 20 per cent of population receives only four per cent. This fact is an attack on governability.

We want to underscore the importance of a meeting that was held at the United Nations last week — the gathering of world leaders in an alliance against hunger and poverty, which resulted in a serious commitment on the part of each and every one of our representatives here to fight unwaveringly and effectively to achieve the agreed objectives.

For the Government of the Dominican Republic, the fight against corruption is a priority. We have shown this by implementing mechanisms to prevent and punish acts of corruption. That scourge has a grave impact on the economies of our countries. We all know that the main victims of corruption are the poor. We need, above all, to strengthen existing mechanisms, and to produce others if necessary, in order to wage a pitched battle against corruption and those who benefit from it, regardless of their origin or social class. We have taken this decision because we see that the rise in corruption in our region has jeopardized the governability of all of our countries. Governmental transparency and a greater participation of civil society are necessary to combat this evil.

We wish to emphasize this morning the importance and effectiveness of the follow-up

mechanism for the implementation of the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption, and its Plan of Action adopted in Managua. Likewise, we ask that our countries not be used as safe havens for persons convicted of acts of corruption. We also advocate the return of those ill-gotten gains to the countries that have fallen victim to this evil, which, together with drug trafficking, has a negative impact on the stability of democracy and the enforcement of the rule of law.

In recent years, Dominican Republic has made real progress in its struggle against trafficking in persons, where the most vulnerable populations are women and children, whether at the regional or international level. Through the establishment of national and international networks against trafficking in Dominican children and adolescents, and with the cooperation of the diplomatic foreign and consular services, we have made great strides in that area. We take this opportunity to emphasize the participation of the International Organization for Migration and its important support in this struggle.

As for the struggle of countries against the manufacture and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, our country is committed to assisting in the areas of investigation and the adoption of measures for strengthening global and regional cooperation in order to fight against this scourge. States must continue to make every effort to implement the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We also want to express our deep concern at the high level of kidnappings and crime in our countries — a level that increases year after year, thus worsening the sense of insecurity felt by persons of all social classes and races. The rise in crime is a threat to the security and safety of our citizens and to the democratic governability of all of our countries. Well-designed deterrence mechanisms based on zero tolerance, an efficient police force, and a strengthened judiciary will all be necessary to reduce this scourge, which has a significant impact on the lives of our citizens.

On a different topic, the Caribbean now has the second highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the world. We invite the Member States of the United Nations to rededicate themselves to the terms of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted at the special session of the General Assembly on 27 June 2001.

Dominican legislation includes law 55-93 on HIV/AIDS, which is now in the process of being reformed and which represents one of the few existing pieces of legislation in our region regarding that disease. We reiterate the request for cooperation to the international community so that, through financing, the countries most seriously affected can have more resources to deal with the consequences of that illness in order to provide the comprehensive care that is very necessary, as well as the antiretroviral medications to combat the illness. This is based on the right of all citizens to life and health.

In recent years and in most international forums, our country has referred to the grave crisis confronting the sister republic of Haiti. We have drawn attention to the fact that the Dominican Republic could not and cannot bear the weight of this crisis and its consequences on its shoulders alone. On more than one occasion we have called on the international community for solidarity. We do so with the intent of beginning a far-reaching process that can help in finding a solution to this problem. Today, we see that overcoming this crisis represents a major challenge to the United Nations, and therefore we support the process that began through the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. We consider it very important that the Haitian people see this peaceful mission as the participation of the international community in the stabilization of their nation, and that they at no time view it as an occupation force.

Hurricane Jeanne has caused thousands of deaths and much destruction in the area of Gonaïves, Haiti, thus deepening the economic and humanitarian crisis in that country. Now, more than ever, we call on the international community and international financial bodies to provide the necessary financial resources that can place that nation on the path toward stability and progress.

Many regions of the world have not yet achieved the peace to which they aspire. Despite all the efforts undertaken in that regard, innocent people continue to lose their lives in a conflict that for decades has characterized the instability of the Middle East.

The Dominican Republic avails itself of this forum to reaffirm its unrestricted support for the peace process begun between Israel and Palestine during the

1991 Madrid Conference, for the Oslo Agreements, for the recommendations made by United States Senator George Mitchell in his final report and for the road map presented by President George Bush and supported by Russia and the European Union.

Finally, the Dominican Republic reiterates its position, expressed in various forums, on the need for a constructive dialogue between the nations located on both sides of the Straits of Taiwan in order to ensure peace and security in that region.

I conclude by expressing the hope that this occasion has enabled the Governments represented at this meeting to reflect seriously on our destiny — the destiny of all men and women who live on Earth — and also that the United Nations will be able, with the cooperation of States, to establish the balance necessary for the benefit of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Lamuel Stanislaus, Chairman of the delegation of Grenada.

Mr. Stanislaus (Grenada): My delegation joins in the many laudatory and congratulatory expressions addressed to you, Mr. Ping, as you assume the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. Additionally, we pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, whose presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session was virile, dynamic and constructive, imbued, as he was, with the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job and the vision of Daniel.

Grenada's statement is made from the profound depths of the human heart. The Prime Minister of Grenada, The Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, The Honourable Elvin Nimrod, whose unavoidable absence can be understood, have asked me to speak on their behalf.

The Assembly will, I hope, understand why Grenada's statement in this general debate will focus in large measure on the natural disaster that has befallen the State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. First, Grenada expresses grateful appreciation for the outpouring of sympathy and assistance from the many countries that have already taken the rostrum — especially from the Caribbean leaders who have seen and described to the Assembly, in chilling and heart-rending detail, the devastation of the tri-island State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique caused by jurricane Ivan "the Terrible".

Therefore, there is no need for me to multiply my words except to say that the fickle finger of fate seemed to have conspired with nature — exceedingly benevolent at times, but sometimes equally destructive. This time, it released its full fury on a vulnerable small island developing State, reducing it to rubble. After hurricane Ivan's rage had subsided, there was complete destruction of the infrastructure, and it seemed as if a Stygian darkness had descended on the land. However, the resilience of our people and the emerging solidarity give us hope that, with the assistance of the international community, Grenada — like the mythological phoenix — will rise from the ashes brought about by the hurricane.

Who can help us pick up the pieces of a shattered country with a dislocated economy, whose precipitous decline has brought it to rock bottom? An assessment of the destruction reveals that it would take $2 billion to rebuild the State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. That is a Herculean task far beyond our means. The call, therefore, is made to the international community: "Come down to Macedonia and help us". We plead with the United Nations, its agencies the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, individual countries, individual permanent representatives, non-governmental organizations and friends to help Grenada help itself.

In that connection, my delegation recalls the words of the seventeenth-century English clergyman and poet John Donne: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." Thus, what happens to each of us affects all of us. Today, that is eminently borne out by the interconnectivity and interdependence of societies, aided by the information and communication technology revolution. Consequently, we speak today about a world shared by all instead of a world divided. Giving, caring and sharing should therefore be a reality, not just a concept.

Forgiving Grenada's debt and cancelling its obligations to international organizations and institutions will give Grenada a breathing spell. Help in

that regard will be formally requested through official channels and will free Grenada of its many obligations.

The dire problems of my country notwithstanding, we cannot fail to touch upon the world situation, in which the geopolitical centre of gravity continues to swing from the Israeli-Palestinian struggle to Iraq and Afghanistan. The situation in those centres of conflict is fanned further by the heinous and atrocious crime of terrorism, which is fast becoming a way of life. In that regard, my delegation recalls an ancient law: hatreds never cease by hatreds; it is by love alone that they cease.

It will be recalled that, from this rostrum, I told my colleagues that I would demit office at the end of this month, having attained the ripe old age of 84 years and having served my country in this honourable body for almost 13 years. Today, I want to recant with regard to that diplomatic note on my premature departure and to tell the Assembly that my Government has asked me to continue. Therefore, refreshed in body and mind, confident in faith and joyful in hope, I will continue to expect the generous assistance of my colleagues.

With respect to my age, I should like to quote Sir Francis Bacon, who wrote several centuries ago that age appears to be best in four things: old wood best to burn, old wine to drink, old friends to trust and old authors to read. Colleagues, I treasure your friendship and ask for your support on behalf of my country.

Let me conclude with this patriotic verse:

> To all the world I give my hand,
> My heart I give my native land;
> I seek her good, her glory.
> I honour every nation's name,
> Respect their fortune and their fame;
> But I love the land that bore me!
> Love the land that bore me!

Please allow me an addendum to my statement. I wish to announce that tomorrow, Friday, at 10.30 a.m. in the Economic and Social Council Chamber, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme will make a flash appeal for assistance to Grenada and Haiti.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Stuart Leslie, head of the delegation from Belize.

Mr. Leslie (Belize): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency. We have every confidence that the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly will enjoy success under your leadership. We would also like to acknowledge the good work of your predecessor, Minister Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia, whose efforts led to a new level of enthusiasm within the General Assembly. In addition, we recognize the tireless efforts of our Secretary-General.

Events of the past months impel us to ponder the importance of our Organization in the never-ending struggle to secure a peaceful and dignified future for the world. The United Nations was born to promote those values that would unite humanity — values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for peoples and for nature — and thus transcend the differences of the world's cultures. And so it is these United Nations large and small come to find, in the words of our Secretary-General, common solutions to common problems. And so it is that we the Member States must ensure that the United Nations is effective for our ends.

In Belize we understand that and remain a legitimate partner in promoting principles such as peace, the right to self-determination, social justice, respect for human dignity, the rule of law, the right to development and the protection of our environment.

We stand for those principles not just because of the international instruments we signed, but because they represent the best way to end poverty, illiteracy, hate and ignorance, to stop the spread of terrorism and to bring an end to inequality, oppression, and injustice.

For the overwhelming majority in the United Nations, the solution to many of the world's problems can be found in the right of every nation to achieve meaningful sustainable development. Accomplishing such goals is not easy, but neither is it impossible.

Challenges to development abound — challenges that make us inherently vulnerable — and we as small States call on the international community to take into account our vulnerability so as to ensure that policies and measures relating to development correspond to our social needs.

As a member of the Alliance of Small Island States, my country underscores the importance of addressing the special needs of such States through the

implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. An international meeting, which will conduct a full and comprehensive 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action, will be held in Mauritius in January 2005, providing an opportunity for the international community, especially the bilateral and multilateral donors, to renew their commitments to the Barbados Programme of Action.

Of special importance to us all is the issue of climate change, and we must not flinch from taking effective measures to address that problem; those who seek to block effective solutions are creating conditions for insecurity that would dwarf the threats currently posed by terrorism.

In that context, we remind Member States of the proposals first submitted to the General Assembly in 1999 to designate the Caribbean Sea as a "special area" within the context of sustainable development. The recent spate of hurricanes that have devastated our region — especially Grenada and Haiti — and which call for major efforts from the international community to mitigate our losses, reinforce our contention that our Caribbean Sea is as fragile as it is vulnerable and as fragile as it is valuable to our social and economic well-being, indeed to our very survival.

We call upon the Assembly to support us in our just efforts to achieve the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a "special area" during this session of the General Assembly.

In addition to addressing the special needs of developing countries, development policies must, above all, be people centred. Coherent policies, sustainable partnerships, sustained support and ownership are critical factors for development. That has never been as clear as in the case of Haiti. In the words of our Secretary-General,

> "the international community failed to develop ... sustainable partnerships with the Haitian society at all levels. The Haitian people were insufficiently involved in the development of policies that could move the country forward. ... Financial aid did not bear fruit to the extent expected because it was at times ill-targeted ..." (*S/2004/300, para. 6*).

With the lesson thus learned, we have an opportunity to influence a positive wave of development for the people of Haiti.

In Haiti, we also have a clear example of the inextricable linkage between development and security. There, threats and challenges to peace and security necessitate an integrated approach. My country hopes that the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will embrace that approach in its findings and recommendations.

While we condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and have joined international efforts in the fight against terrorism, we are mindful that our actions for the preservation of peace and security must be consistent with international law and must be respectful of the human rights and freedoms of all peoples without discrimination, foremost among which must be the right to self-determination.

For that reason, we shall remain strong proponents of the right of the Palestinian people to a secure and viable State. It is also for the same reason that we support the Taiwanese people's right for representation before the United Nations.

But what United Nations? Last year our Minister of Foreign Affairs confined his remarks to an urgent call for the United Nations to recall and enforce the principles on which it was founded, basic among which is the principle of multilateralism — the most fundamental conviction that led to its creation: that States, on the basis of sovereign equality, conjointly take decisions that secure a peaceful and prosperous world for all.

Tragically, events since then have only exacerbated the problem whereby powerful States take the law into their own hands and act in total disregard of the principles of the United Nations Charter and indeed of international law. If we do not act together to reverse that evil trend, we are walking — nay, running — on the road to perdition.

Yes, we support the call of India, Japan, Brazil and Germany for a permanent seat on the Security Council, if there must be permanent seats. And to this we would add the equally legitimate right of African and Arab nations to be so represented. But the reforms must go deeper. Why should any one country have a veto power? Why should millions of the wretched of the earth be left without an effective voice and be

powerless to change the world to a more just one? And why do we, who so effectively acted to end apartheid in South Africa, tolerate the equally opprobrious apartheid practised by the State of Israel against Palestinians in their own land, murdering and oppressing them without mercy and with impunity?

The year 2004 has been declared the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition. Slavery was based on an exacerbated racism; so let us honour that struggle by implementing the Final Declaration of the World Conference against Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in South Africa in 2001.

Likewise we continue to support United Nations efforts to bring greater visibility to the problems of the world's indigenous people during the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. As the International Decade draws to a close later this year we call for a second decade to continue the work achieved during the first decade and so to carry out and complete the work that has not yet been completed.

In our own community of small States, we face the most serious threat to our peoples' security, caused by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons that claim the lives of so many of our people. These arms come from countries that must be called upon to live up to their responsibility to cooperate with us to stem the flow of these lethal weapons and to enter into legally binding agreements for the effective registration and monitoring of transfers of these weapons of widespread destruction. An international convention to achieve this must be put on our agenda urgently.

Another major issue for our region is the continued attempt to isolate the sister Caribbean Republic of Cuba and to strengthen an economic embargo that has been condemned repeatedly by the overwhelming majority of this Assembly. The entire Caribbean Community is at one in its resolve to engage Cuba in a constructive and mutually beneficial partnership that brings concrete benefits to all our peoples. The Cuban Government has, by its actions, manifested its determination to fight against terrorism in all its forms and from every quarter. For us in the Caribbean, any call for "regime change" imposed from outside violates every principle upon which the United Nations Organization stands.

Belize has its own cause to promote. The United Nations is well aware of the age-old and unfounded territorial claim of Guatemala, and it has clearly and unanimously called for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belize. We have endeavoured to negotiate a just solution to this claim for decades, and in the last four years we have been engaged in a process under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS), aimed at bringing this anachronistic claim to an end. Agreements have been made and broken, in the context of a Guatemala that has proclaimed its desire to find a peaceful solution to the dispute. Still no solution is in sight. The worst scenario is for the claim to linger unresolved, thus affecting the security and development of our people.

We welcome the remarks of President Berger of Guatemala before this Assembly on 22 September, when he advocated a final settlement of the dispute, along with cooperation between our two countries to improve the socio-economic conditions of both our peoples. We certainly support this approach and will do our part, as we have always done, to achieve those noble goals. But cooperation does not substitute for resolution of this age-old threat to the security and prosperity of our people. We will, therefore, continue to work within the OAS to develop an agreed process that will bring finality to this matter, which will undoubtedly redound to the benefit of the peoples of both Belize and Guatemala and contribute to the peace and security of the region. In the search for bringing this longstanding dispute to an end, we place high hopes on the role of the Group of Friends that has been agreed by both parties to reach this objective, and we look forward to its greater input and support to the process.

The challenges we face in the world today are not all unique to our generation. Some are the result of our refusal to learn from the mistakes of the past; others are entirely of our making. Yet, if we are to look at those values that unite us and we are determined in our desire for good, we will find that working together brings us ever closer to amore just and peaceful world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. John Dauth, chairman of the delegation of Australia.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): Sir, let me begin by congratulating you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, and let me

say how honoured I am to be one of your Vice-Presidents.

I want to say also how delighted Australia is to welcome Iraq back to the General Assembly.

We, the nations of the world, gathered here at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, face challenges to international security and prosperity that are very different from those which existed at the birth of the United Nations. However, the aims of the United Nations as set out in the Preamble to the Charter remain as relevant and vital today as they did then:

> "to save successive generations from the scourge of war ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights ... to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained ... and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

Today, the menace of terrorism and the dangers of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) cast their shadow across the globe, threatening not only our security, but also the development gains and future prosperity of all nations.

It is this new international environment, this new reality, to which we must all adjust. The United Nations is no exception. The United Nations is a vital institution that does great humanitarian work, but it must strengthen its capacity to deal effectively with the problems we now face or risk sliding into irrelevance.

The Secretary-General himself recognized this last year when he said that we have come to a fork in the road, a moment no less decisive than in 1945 when the United Nations was founded. And, again this year, he stated that if the leaders of the world could not agree on the way forward, history would take the decisions. The issue he raises for us all is whether we, the United Nations membership, can rise to the challenge and take the steps necessary for the Organization to fulfil its aims in today's world.

Australia strongly supported last year the establishment by the Secretary-General of a High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and we stand ready to contribute to ambitious outcomes. I want to return to the work of the Panel later in this address.

There would be few nations in the room untouched by terrorism. As the cowardly attacks in Beslan and at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta illustrate, terrorism will not simply fade away. In response, we, the international community, cannot allow security threats to fester. What is required is new thinking, practical action, and cooperation between Governments. Obviously, the United Nations has a primary role to play. But Governments and regional organizations must also ensure that their resources and infrastructure can respond to the current environment.

This is a responsibility Australia has taken very seriously. On terrorism, we have fully supported the work of the United Nations, ensuring Jema'ah Islamiyah was listed as a terrorist organization under the Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) sanctions regime and promoting compliance with the United Nations terrorist asset freezing regime.

We have committed energy and resources to building counter-terrorism cooperation in our own region, both bilaterally and through organizations such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations. We are also committed to building understanding as part of a comprehensive approach. This is evident in the messages we convey to our regional partners and to Australians — namely, that our efforts to stop a minority of extremist Muslim terrorists is not a war on Islam; that Muslims are as much the victims of terrorist attacks and must defend themselves; and that we must all work to defeat terrorism together.

Our cooperation with regional partners has delivered results, but as the recent bombing in Jakarta illustrates, terrorism in our own region is not yet defeated. While Australia's embassy in Jakarta may have been the target of the latest attack, it was as much an assault on Indonesia as on Australia, and we are particularly saddened by the loss of innocent Indonesian lives. Indonesia and Australia are determined to catch the perpetrators and see justice done, for the bonds between us cannot be split by terrorists, but only strengthened.

Australia's commitment to a stable and secure region is particularly reflected in our efforts in the Pacific. Since 11 September 2001, we have come to appreciate more acutely the dangers weak and failing States can pose to security. Of course, not all such

States are home to terrorists, but where instability and vulnerabilities exist, so, too, do opportunities for crime and the potential for human suffering.

When our Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, addressed this forum last year, he noted Australia was developing regional approaches to confront the dangers of State failure and that with our Pacific Islands Forum partners we were restoring hope to the people of Solomon Islands. In just one year, the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands has made excellent progress in restoring stability and law and consolidating Government finances, and is now moving into long-term governance reform.

Australia is also working with other States in our region, notably Papua New Guinea and Nauru, to address economic management and governance issues. Regional cooperation is being strengthened through the Pacific Plan, an initiative of the recent Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Apia, which seeks to enhance collaboration in areas of governance. I am delighted to see among us today the Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum and welcome him to this Hall.

We would encourage the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change to outline ambitious proposals for effective collective action to address failed and failing States, including more explicit provision for action by regional and other plurilateral arrangements, as set out in Chapter VIII of the Charter.

Iraq is at a critical moment in its political evolution. A small minority is bent on destruction and murder and wants to deny the Iraqi people their opportunity to express their political will through elections. This minority also attacks those who are working to rebuild Iraq's economy and improve Iraqi lives. Increasingly, Iraqis themselves will be responsible for doing that work, but success will depend on the resolute support of the international community.

We cannot allow terrorists to disrupt the democratic process in Iraq. Prime Minister Alawi has emphasized his Government's determination to hold elections in January 2005 and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq has told the Security Council that maintaining the election schedule is his greatest priority. While the difficult security conditions in Iraq cannot be denied, it is imperative that the United Nations fulfil its role under Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) and work with Iraqis to complete arrangements for the elections on time.

The size of the United Nations presence in Iraq must be commensurate with the importance and urgency of its task. For its part, Australia remains committed to assisting Iraq transform itself. To this end, we have committed more than $125 million, much of it directed through United Nations agencies.

The situation in Darfur is a humanitarian disaster. Australia is committed to supporting urgent international efforts to end this horrific crisis. We have already committed $20 million in emergency assistance for the people of Darfur. We welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 1564 (2004) and applaud the African Union for agreeing to lead a mission to Darfur. Let me make this very clear: we stand ready to offer assistance to this mission. The situation in Darfur highlights the need for the international community to develop a better framework for responding to humanitarian crises, and we hope the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will come up with clear and workable recommendations on humanitarian intervention.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) is another urgent concern. Unless we act firmly and with unity, terrorist groups could one day acquire WMDs with disastrous consequences. As a threat to international security, the issue of WMD proliferation falls squarely within the Security Council's mandate. We welcome the adoption of resolution 1540 (2004) as a demonstration of the Council's willingness to tackle WMD proliferation, including the risk of WMD terrorism. We hope that with the adoption of this resolution, the Council will take a firmer and more active stance on WMD issues.

As part of our commitment to combating the risk of nuclear terrorism, Australia will host an Asia-Pacific ministerial conference in November on nuclear safeguards and security. In addition, in the First Committee this year, we, along with Turkey and Argentina, will introduce a draft resolution on the prevention of the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to, and use of, man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS). We hope for a consensus adoption of this draft resolution, which encourages States to take concrete steps to prevent MANPADS from falling into the hands of non-State end-users.

Allow me to return to the subject of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. During this address, I have referred several times to it. Australia welcomes the direction of panel discussions — as far as we understand them — with respect to both doctrinal and institutional reform. We have contributed actively to the Panel's work and we encourage the Panel, in its remaining deliberations, to work towards ambitious recommendations on its entire programme of work, including Security Council reform, addressing threats from WMDs and terrorism, humanitarian intervention and effective collective action.

On the issue of structural reform, we note here that Australia has advocated expanding the permanent membership of the Security Council to make it more compatible with geographical realities, through the addition of Japan, India, Brazil, an African country and Indonesia. Whatever the final shape of the Panel's report, one thing is clear: high-level political commitment will be crucial to bringing bold reform recommendations to fruition. We would encourage all Member States to give the Secretary-General their full support in considering the Panel's recommendations.

One opportunity to do this will be the 2005 United Nations summit of heads of State or Government. The summit provides an excellent forum, not only to review implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, but also to endorse a reformed United Nations that is better equipped to deal with the challenges it faces.

Australia has long advocated the need for United Nations reform. Back in 2000 in this forum, the Prime Minister warned that,

> "In the absence of change and adaptation, the Organization will wither as the nations of the world bypass it in favour of ... mechanisms that are more relevant to their needs" (*A/55/PV.20, p. 25*).

Of course, this warning was before 11 September 2001, before coalition action in Afghanistan and Iraq and before the terrorist bombings in Bali, Jakarta, Madrid, Istanbul and many other locations. If the need for reform was pressing then, it is critical now. The High-level Panel provides the best prospect for repositioning the United Nations system to meet contemporary challenges. This is an opportunity we cannot waste if the United Nations — our Organization — is to retain a substantial role in maintaining international peace and security in the twenty-first century.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Over the past two weeks, the leaders of our respective nations have expressed their views on the major issues of concern to our world. As I now draw our preliminary conclusions, many of these speakers have already gone home to their countries. However, their statements and their policies still continue to resonate here. I was particularly struck by the forcefulness of the ideas expressed, and have no doubt that they will continue to inspire and guide our deliberations. I appreciated in particular the show of solidarity for collectively tackling the threats and challenges facing mankind.

I had an opportunity, on the sidelines of our debate, to speak with a large number of high-level representatives and leaders of Member States. Those talks reaffirmed the will of our leaders to strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly and their dedication to multilateralism, which forms the basis for the goals and objectives pursued by the United Nations.

It is clear that we will need to do even more to root our action in the spirit of the Charter to provide it with strength and legitimacy. Here, the Secretary-General's call to advance the rule of law and strengthen the role of the United Nations — which, in the words of the Millennium Declaration, remains "the indispensable common house of the entire human family" (*A/59/PV.3, p. 2*) — should be a further source of inspiration throughout the present session.

Of the 191 States Member of the United Nations, 190 of them, plus two observers, took the floor during the general debate. Among the Member States, 81 were represented by their respective heads of State or Government.

Of the 190 statements made by Member States, 121 took up the question of the reform of the United Nations, emphasizing both the progress made and the road that lies ahead. A considerable number of those statements in fact contained specific proposals urging us to continue improving the functioning and the effectiveness of our Organization.

A great majority of the world's leaders specifically underscored reform of the United Nations system, particularly reform of the Security Council, revitalization of the General Assembly and progress towards the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Our leaders all indicated their interest in the report we are awaiting from the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, appointed by the Secretary-General to consider threats to international peace and security and collective measures that can contribute to overcoming them.

Of all these issues, reform of the Security Council prompted the greatest number of comments and statements. Indeed, 140 Member States spoke of that issue. A majority indicated a preference for enlargement of both categories of members — permanent and non-permanent. Others wished to see solely an enlargement of the non-permanent membership. Still others would be prepared to accept a reform of the Security Council whatever option was decided on. Because of the importance that our leaders attach to Security Council reform, I shall devote particular attention to the efforts we still need to make to achieve consensus on that issue.

The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly was also a subject of great concern for most Member States, which welcomed the progress achieved during the fifty-eighth session. They emphasized the need, however, to implement the recommendations already adopted and to pursue the process. In that context, I shall be working in close cooperation with the other members of the Bureau.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to announce that this very afternoon, the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and I will be meeting to strengthen cooperation, coordination and the complementarity of the programmes of work of those three principal organs, in accordance with the responsibilities allocated them by the Charter and under our previous resolutions on the revitalization of our work. In the same spirit, it is my intention to hold similar meetings during the next few months, and I am counting on the cooperation and the continued readiness of my counterparts from the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Concerning the Goals defined in the Millennium Declaration, Member States deplored the slow progress in implementing the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and evinced considerable interest in the 2005 summit. I call for cooperation from the Assembly to ensure proper preparation for that summit. Allow me to take this opportunity once again to urgently appeal to all Member States, individually and collectively, to redouble our efforts in order to fill the gaps in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The worst mistake would be a failure to act.

So too, the debate revealed the need to deal with the situation of the least developed countries, of landlocked countries and of small island developing States, regarding their economic, social and climatic vulnerability. Many representatives advocated the formulation of more equitable policies to promote the economic growth of the developing countries and to better integrate them into the global economy. Particular stress was placed on the situation of Africa and on the need to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Concerned by the deterioration of the environment, the Assembly drew attention to the need to take appropriate corrective measures and underscored the importance of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol.

Our leaders also stressed the need to strengthen international peace and security, in particular by fighting the phenomenon of terrorism, strengthening means for preventing and combating the resurgence of crises and armed conflicts, and controlling the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Virtually all speakers expressed their concern about the situation in Iraq and asked the United Nations to assist, to the best of its ability, the people of Iraq in rebuilding their country.

Member States continue to believe that the road map sets out the only route to follow to stabilize the situation in the Middle East. The meeting of the Quartet held on 22 September alongside the general debate will, I hope, provide new impetus to the peace process.

The situation in Africa, particularly the conflicts in Darfur and in the Great Lakes region, was of particular concern.

The guidelines that have been laid down by our leaders sketch out the framework in which the work of

the present session will be taking place. As I have already indicated, the present session will be key in that it will have the great responsibility of preparing for the major events that will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization next year. I know that I can count on the cooperation and support of members so that together we will be able to conclude the work of the present session successfully.

Two representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind representatives that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Awad Mohamed Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to respond to the inappropriate and negative accusations directed against the Sudan by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea in his statement to the Assembly (see A/59/PV.16).

I regret to say that the authoritarian, rogue Eritrean regime has practised the most brutal forms of dictatorship against its people, in violation of their most fundamental rights. We have no wish to respond to the allegations made against Sudan by the Eritrean delegation, but we would like to ask whether Eritrea is qualified to speak about the political status and stability of other countries. Eritrea is a State that lacks good governance and even the most rudimentary institutional and governmental elements. It is a State administered by one authoritarian and psychotic absolute dictator, who has wrested the most basic human rights from his people and has jailed all his former comrades-in-arms, who brought him to power in an independent Eritrea. He has continued to carry out a policy of assassinations and physical liquidation.

We would like to ask the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea: where are his comrades-in-arms and former Ministers for Foreign Affairs? They are in prison, suffering under very difficult health conditions. He himself does not know where they are imprisoned. Where are his former comrades-in-arms and former Ministers of Defence? Some are in jail, and others have chosen to take refuge outside the country, fearing the brutality of their authoritarian dictator. Where are Eritrea's ambassadors abroad, including the most recent ambassador to the United Nations, a man known to everybody? He has taken political asylum — as have other ambassadors, in Sweden, in Britain and in other countries.

The authoritarian Eritrean regime has the worst human rights record of all, as reflected in a recent Amnesty International report, which bears witness to the situation in Eritrea over the past 10 years. The Eritrean dictatorship has continued to practice all forms of animosity and hostility against its neighbours. Its attack on islands belonging to Yemen, its unjustified war against Ethiopia and its repeated attacks on the eastern borders of the Sudan are good examples of that hostility.

That internationally isolated regime continues to violate international covenants and international law. It maintains camps for training and arming members of groups that oppose my country. It continues to conspire to destroy, demolish and destabilize the region. The open presence of members of the Sudanese opposition in Eritrea is the best example of that fact.

The rogue Eritrean regime should be the last to speak of stability in the Sudan and in the region. It is the one that is fuelling all the strife, conflict and violence in my country and in other countries in the region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representatives of Eritrea.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): The Eritrean delegation is taking the floor in exercise of its right of reply against the slanderous statement made by the delegation of the Sudan in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made yesterday by the Eritrean Foreign Minister.

The history of the Sudan is a history of conflict that started almost at its independence nearly five decades ago, so much earlier than Eritrea's independence in 1991. Therefore, the Sudan cannot blame a new nation for its multiple — and multiplying — problems. In truth, the Sudan has nine neighbours and, during the past half century, has had 10 enemies, including itself: the Sudan is its own worst enemy.

The genocide in Darfur may be attracting more international attention now, but the fact is that the Sudan has been ravaged by civil strife throughout its independent existence and that it has antagonized its immediate neighbours and countries beyond. It has been a primary exporter of terrorism, particularly during the past decade and a half. Who can forget that

it hosted and gave safe haven to both Carlos the Jackal and Osama bin Laden? Who can forget the assassination attempts against President Mubarak of Egypt in Addis Ababa, where he had gone to attend a meeting of the Organization for African Unity? Who can forget the attempt to assassinate my own President by a Sudanese security officer in the same year? And what about the terrorist group organized by Hassan al-Turabi and Osama bin Laden against our new country only two years after our independence in 1993, and against several of its neighbours? Can anyone forget the Belgian tourists whose throats were cut by terrorist groups financed and trained by the Sudan, or the British mining officer who a year and a half ago was savagely mutilated only a day after he had e-mailed his wife about the good time he was having in Eritrea?

The latest terrorist attacks against Eritrea occurred on 23 May, during Independence Day celebrations in the towns of Barentu and Tesseney. We lost about a dozen people, while almost a score were wounded. Among them were women, children and elderly people.

The Sudanese delegation speaks about members of the Sudanese opposition in Eritrea. The National Democratic Alliance has an office in Asmara, as it has in other African countries and in Europe. It is not a clandestine movement unknown to the Sudan and the world. Indeed, members of the Sudanese Government, including the President of the Sudan himself, officially visited Asmara on several occasions to hold peace negotiations with the leadership of the National Democratic Alliance. Eritrea is proud to have made the arrangements for those meetings and to have acted as facilitator. Needless to say, the Eritrean delegation rejects the silly accusations levelled by the Sudanese delegation. They are intended to distract attention from Darfur and the Sudan's other problems.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

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General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

18th plenary meeting
Monday, 4 October 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items: reports of the General Committee

Second report of the General Committee (A/59/250/Add.1)

Letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences (A/59/351/Add.1)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should first like to draw the attention of representatives to the second report of the General Committee (A/59/250/Add.1).

In paragraph 1 of the report, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that an additional sub-item, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the community of Portuguese-speaking countries", be included under agenda item 56, "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations", under heading I, Organizational, administrative and other matters. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include that additional sub-item in the agenda of the current session as a sub-item of agenda item 56 under heading I?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): The General Committee further recommends that this additional sub-item be considered directly in plenary meeting. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this sub-item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform members that the new sub-item becomes sub-item (t) of agenda item 56.

In paragraph 2 of the report, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that an additional item, entitled "Observer status for the Economic Community of West African States in the General Assembly", be included in the agenda of the current session under heading I, Organizational, administrative and other matters. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional item in the agenda of the current session under heading I?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): The General Committee further recommends that the additional item be allocated to the Sixth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate this item to the Sixth Committee?

It is was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform members that this item becomes agenda item 159.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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In paragraph 3 of the same document, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that agenda item 109, "Programme planning", also be allocated to the Third Committee with respect to programme 19, Human rights, of the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007. May I take it that the General Assembly also decides to allocate this item to the Third Committee?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Chairmen of the Third and Sixth Committees will be informed of the decisions just taken by the General Assembly.

I now wish to draw the attention of members to paragraph 4 of the General Committee's report. In that paragraph, the Committee took note of the clarification that, in implementing resolution 58/316 of 1 July 2004 to consider item 12, "Report of the Economic and Social Council", in its entirety in plenary, the relevant parts of chapter I of the report that are under agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees will be considered by the Committee concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

The Assembly will now turn its attention to document A/59/351/Add.1, which contains a letter dated 27 September 2004 from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the President of the General Assembly regarding a request by the United Nations Administrative Tribunal to meet during the main part of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Members are aware that, pursuant to section I, paragraph 7, of Assembly resolution 40/243, no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly may meet at United Nations Headquarters during the substantive part of a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized to do so by the Assembly.

In this connection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to authorize the United Nations Administrative Tribunal to meet during the substantive part of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, on the strict understanding that such a meeting would have to be accommodated within available facilities and services?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 52 and 54

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354)

The President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will consider, in a joint debate, agenda items 52 and 54.

In connection with agenda item 54, the report of the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations has been circulated in document A/59/354.

I give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, to introduce the report of the Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: Thank you, Mr. President, for having given me this opportunity to speak to the General Assembly about the relationship between the United Nations and civil society. Two documents are now before the Assembly: the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons headed by former President Cardoso; and the Secretary-General's own response to that report.

As members know, the relationship between the United Nations and civil society is as old as the Charter itself. But in the past decade, there has been an enormous transformation in the nature and importance of the role played by civil society on the global scene. Where once global conferences were largely the realm of Governments, today it would be unthinkable to stage such events without the unique advocacy and mobilization of non-governmental actors. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have always been key partners of the United Nations at the country level, in both development work and in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, but today they are making increasingly important contributions to global policy debates and intergovernmental deliberations in areas ranging from the environment to gender mainstreaming.

Such exponential growth in both numbers and influence has created a range of new challenges for the United Nations. The Secretary-General established the Cardoso Panel to assess and draw lessons from the

interaction of the United Nations with civil society, and recommend ways to improve it.

The Panel consulted widely with Member States and with a range of networks, constituencies and groups. I think that members will agree that its report is an impressive document. It contains well-considered and innovative recommendations that offer a solid basis for discussion and debate. The Secretary-General hopes that his response will assist the Assembly in taking those proposals forward.

The starting point for all of these recommendations is that the United Nations is and will remain an intergovernmental Organization in which decisions are taken by its Member States, and nothing in either of the reports calls that fundamental principle into question. But the Panel makes two important appeals to Member States.

First, the Panel argues that the United Nations must become an even more outward-looking Organization, or in the words of the Cardoso report, a "networking" Organization. That means using its unique convening power to reach out to non-governmental actors, especially where such actors command great expertise or resources relevant to a particular issue. In so doing, the Organization will expand its global reach and influence.

Secondly, the Panel argues that the United Nations needs to do more to connect the global with the local. By this, it means preventing any disconnect between statements and policy discussions in intergovernmental forums and life as it is lived by people in slums, conflict areas and other zones of need throughout the world. The articulation of the Millennium Development Goals has helped to close that gap, since those Goals can guide national strategies, which, in turn, can be implemented by local authorities and community-based organizations. But much more needs to be done so that people can feel that their agenda is the agenda of the United Nations. The Secretary-General welcomes the Panel's vision, and supports it.

In responding to these appeals, and in adapting our Organization, we are not starting from scratch. Member States have been very creative in developing new forms of interaction with civil society. Round-table and panel discussions, open debates of the Security Council and other such steps are now regular features of the United Nations calendar.

The Panel's report and the Secretary-General's response seek to embed, expand and deepen the participation of different constituencies in the work of the intergovernmental bodies. The Secretary-General suggests action in six main areas.

First, the contribution of NGOs in intergovernmental bodies should be built into the regular business of the Assembly. The Secretary-General suggests, for instance, that Member States could hold interactive hearings with NGO representatives before each session of the General Assembly, and before major events, such as next year's high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS.

Secondly, the Secretary-General will establish a single trust fund in order to facilitate and increase the participation of representatives of NGOs from developing countries. Thirdly, the accreditation process should be improved and simplified by establishing a single system of accrediting and streamlining certain aspects of the process. Fourthly, the Secretariat's own dialogue with NGOs at Headquarters should be improved, including by giving them easier access to information and documentation.

Fifthly, engagement with NGOs at the country level should likewise be intensified, including through better and more regular interaction with the resident coordinators, and through steps to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs. Sixthly, the new Partnerships Office should be tasked with ensuring greater coherence among the disparate units within the Secretariat that currently interact with different constituencies.

Taken together, the proposals of the Panel and the Secretary-General aim to strengthen the United Nations, enrich intergovernmental debate and, most importantly, improve the services that we provide to the world's people. They are the results of very broad consultations among a full range of stakeholders — governmental and non-governmental. It goes without saying that the implementation of the Assembly's decisions can move forward only with the cooperation of all concerned. The Secretary-General hopes that members will give positive consideration to the recommendations he has placed before them, and that they will be able to reach agreement by the end of the fall session.

The contribution of civil society groups to the United Nations has been invaluable. The time is right

to take this partnership one step further for the benefit of this Organization and the people whom it was created to serve.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General.

Mr. Van den Berg (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro; and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

Let me first of all thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her introduction to this debate and in particular for her introduction of the report of the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354).

The European Union welcomes the opportunity of this joint debate. It underlines the need to address both the strengthening of the United Nations itself and the strengthening of its intergovernmental structures. With 25 member States, the European Union represents 13 per cent of the United Nations membership. The EU member States contribute more than 36 per cent of the regular budget of the United Nations and make about 50 per cent of all voluntary contributions to United Nations funds and programmes. It goes without saying that the EU attaches high priority to an effective and efficient United Nations system.

In the view of the European Union, the United Nations is uniquely placed to provide the framework for international cooperation. It has no substitute in the international community. But the Organization has to adapt to changing conditions, and that requires reform, not for reform's sake, but in order to make the United Nations stronger.

The European Union considers the United Nations high- level event of September 2005 a logical culmination point to agree on change and implementation. The event will review the progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and related goals in the field of peace, governance and development, the progress made towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals, and the follow-up to the major economic and social conferences and summits on the strengthening of the United Nations. At a later date in the plenary, we will have a more in-depth discussion on the precise objectives and modalities of the summit.

Our statement will address three issues related to today's debate.

First, we will assess the efforts of the Secretary-General in strengthening the Organization, taking as benchmarks in particular his far-reaching proposals of 1997 and 2002; secondly, we will focus on the concrete tasks before us to further streamline and strengthen the work of the General Assembly; and, thirdly, we will give the European Union's preliminary views on the so-called Cardoso report on relations between the United Nations and civil society.

In general terms, the European Union is of the opinion that the Secretary-General, sometimes in the face of opposition by Member States, has managed to introduce courageous and constructive changes to the Organization. Still, a great deal more needs to be done, and Member States need to fully support the Secretary-General in achieving further necessary reforms.

In the area of intergovernmental reform, for which Member States bear primary responsibility, only limited progress has been achieved. Proposals often have been met with resistance or with suspicion. The Secretary-General has often been reluctant to give his advice on intergovernmental reform, but, possibly, proposals from his side could help to speed up the process.

Let me touch upon the institutional side of United Nations reform. Many important initiatives have been taken by the Secretary-General since he took office: the "Renewing the United Nations" report in 1997; the Brahimi report in 2000; and, most recently, the "Strengthening of the United Nations" report in 2002. Let us take a moment to review what has been achieved.

All of the Secretary-General's initiatives share a common purpose: streamlining the internal functioning of the United Nations system, in order to ensure that available resources are spent in the most efficient way possible to achieve the goals of the Organization. Thus, we should examine whether the Secretary-General has

managed to markedly improve the internal efficiency of the United Nations since 1997. Let us take a look at the progress made in some of the main areas featured in the reports of the Secretary-General.

With respect to the rationalization of the United Nations system, today we see a more logical structure of the United Nations. Departments have been grouped together, common themes have been identified, and the creation of systemic linkages such as the Chief Executive Board have improved communications within a sprawling Organization.

At the country level, many previously separate activities have been consolidated through the establishment of shared offices and a stronger Resident Coordinator position. The United Nations is increasingly using shared tools such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the Common Country Assessment.

As concerns peacekeeping operations, there is now movement towards a clearer, more concise planning process, aimed at improving the deployment of peacekeeping operations. However, further improvements are needed.

In the area of human rights, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has moved forward with actions to improve both its internal management and the services it provides to Member States. Protecting, promoting and supporting human rights at the country level remains a priority. The European Union fully supports the efforts of the Office of the High Commissioner to strengthen human rights-related United Nations actions at the country level based on Action 2 of the Secretary-General's "Strengthening of the United Nations: An agenda for further change".

We welcome the efforts of human rights treaty bodies to streamline reporting procedures. The importance of an effective Commission on Human Rights as the pre-eminent body for the protection and promotion of human rights is crucial, in particular in the light of new threats, challenges and changes.

Turning to human resources management, measures such as better human resources planning and greater adaptability for the Secretary-General as concerns the staffing table are clear steps to better manage the Organization's most valuable asset: its staff.

Regarding the budget cycle, we have seen adaptations — although in small steps — to the unwieldy budget process. Slowly but surely, the budget process is becoming better equipped to link the Organization's resource to its priorities. The adaptation of the principles of results-based budgeting is a further positive development.

All this is still a work in progress. There is still a great deal of overlap in the activities of separate United Nations bodies. Integrated planning at the Headquarters level still needs significant improvement. The level of United Nations cooperation in the field varies greatly per country, and many human resource management instruments remain archaic by modern standards. Several necessary changes to the budget cycle are long overdue. The concerns of the European Union regarding many of these matters are well known to all.

However, let us be frank. Much still needs to be done, but we are further along now than many in this room anticipated several years ago. The fact that much of the work remains to be done can only be attributed to indecisiveness on the part of Member States. We cannot only look to the Secretary-General for reform. Many of his proposals could have been bold steps forward for this Organization, but we, the Member States, seem too often to prefer the lowest common denominator.

It is now up to us, the Member States, to provide the support and to maintain the momentum for change. We cannot get bogged down in endless debate. The Secretary-General is doing his part; we must not lag behind. The ball is in our court.

The European Union will remain strongly focused on the reform process. This year, several important institutional issues are before us. First, we will have to take decisions on a potentially major overhaul of the safety and security policies of the Organization, both at Headquarters and in the field. The EU looks forward to receiving the Secretariat's report on safety and security and will support appropriate improvements in security measures.

Secondly, we will have to approve the new biennial strategic framework, which will better link resources to the priorities of the Organization.

Thirdly, we must try to improve human resources management. Better mobility of staff, improvement of

management, clarification of contractual agreements, gender balance and rejuvenation of the work force are some of the issues important to the EU.

I have already stated that we, the Member States, need to take an active part in the strengthening of the United Nations. Let me address some issues of an intergovernmental nature, in particular those related to revitalizing the General Assembly itself.

The EU gives its full support to the changes that were agreed upon in resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. We pay our respect to the determination of the previous President of the General Assembly, Julian Hunte, and we will rely fully on your leadership, Sir, to continue this important work.

Resolution 58/316 clearly identified the further work to be undertaken and to be concluded during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The key tasks before us are the following.

First, we have to further rationalize the agendas of the Main Committees by biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items. Recommendations have to be made to the General Assembly in plenary meeting. It has to take a decision by 1 April 2005. The Bureaux have a major responsibility in moving this process forward. The General Committee must play a stimulating role in order to ensure that the General Assembly can take a decision by April 2005.

Secondly, the working methods of the General Committee have to be further improved. Here again, recommendations have to be made to the Assembly for its decision by April 2005. The General Committee should play a more active role in steering and monitoring the effective progress of the Assembly.

Thirdly, the burden of documentation has to be further reduced. There should be core reports highlighting major issues for discussion. This is essential if all delegations are to be in a position to effectively deal with all matters under consideration by the Assembly. The General Committee has been requested to make recommendations to this General Assembly.

Fourthly, the General Assembly will have to make further efforts to streamline the agenda of the plenary. We took some modest steps. We need bolder decisions.

Fifthly, and finally, the EU believes that the General Assembly should streamline the number and the length of the approximately 300 annual resolutions with a view to giving the Assembly more impact.

The EU stands ready, Mr. President, to support you fully in achieving concrete results in the further revitalization of the General Assembly. We call for a transparent but clearly practical process that will lead to visible and effective results.

Obviously, reforming and rationalizing the General Assembly is only one part of strengthening the intergovernmental system. With regard to the Security Council, the EU believes that there is a need for a comprehensive reform to make the Council more representative, more effective and more democratic.

I will now embark on my third issue, the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, A/58/817.

Global policy issues are no longer the realm of Governments alone. The EU, therefore, welcomes the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations as an important contribution to the ongoing debate about giving civil society greater opportunities to contribute to the work of the United Nations. The EU thanks the Secretary-General for his recent report contained in document A/59/354 in response to the report of the Panel under the chairmanship of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The EU agrees with the Secretary-General that the world today is remarkably different from the one in which the United Nations was founded nearly 60 years ago.

In order to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, the United Nations must become a more outward-looking Organization. It must become more grounded in reality. Nothing can serve this purpose better than closer interaction with civil society.

The EU welcomes the broad vision of the Panel and believes that the proposals of the Panel and the Secretary-General form a good basis for our discussions. We favour innovative forms of interaction with civil society, including hearings before major policy-setting events. Such hearings should be focused, in order to provide input into our debates. We should also look into the possibility of allowing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to take part in certain debates of the General Assembly.

We share the Panel's view that the accreditation process for NGOs is in need of streamlining. The EU sees merit in introducing elements of greater coherence and predictability into processes for accrediting NGOs to various United Nations bodies and conferences, with pre-screening of NGO applications by the Secretariat. We would welcome a role for the General Assembly in this process.

The European Union supports the Panel's call for an even stronger participation of civil society organizations from developing countries. We believe that the existing financing mechanisms should be further explored so as to improve their participation. Given the relevant input of women's organizations so far, their participation deserves further encouragement.

The European Union welcomes the steps already undertaken by the Secretary-General to enhance country-level engagement with NGOs. We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to enlarge the Partnerships Office. In our view, this proposal should be further explored.

The European Union looks forward to a constructive debate on the Panel's report and to an outcome that will effectively enhance the relations between the United Nations and civil society. Civil society and other stakeholders mentioned in the report should be given an opportunity to feed their views and comments into the debate.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize the European Union's full commitment to contribute actively and constructively to the ongoing comprehensive reform process of the United Nations. As stated, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations bodies, policies and processes is a priority for the EU. We underline the need to strengthen the United Nations institutions. We wish to honour the commitments contained in chapter VIII of the Millennium Declaration. There is clearly a window of opportunity for change and improvement — a window that may not remain open indefinitely. The high-level meeting of September 2005 may well be a decisive moment for substantial change. We would be rightfully blamed if we were to miss that opportunity.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): It is my privilege to speak on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and Australia in this joint debate on agenda item 52, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", and agenda item 54, "Strengthening of the United Nations system". In that context, I would like on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and Australia to join with our friends from the European Union in thanking most sincerely our friend the Deputy Secretary-General for her helpful introduction this morning to the Cardoso report.

Mr. President, the efforts of your predecessor, Julian Hunte, helped impart new energy into the process of revitalizing the General Assembly, which had, frankly, produced rather little in recent years. Two resolutions emerged, as members know, containing a few useful steps and some valuable principles, but we will need to advance the process again during the fifty-ninth session and beyond if we are indeed to revitalize the General Assembly.

As our delegations have said many times before, the fundamental cause of the malaise in the Assembly is an overloaded, outdated, repetitive and often irrelevant agenda. The decision in our last resolution to arrange the agenda according to the priorities of the medium-term plan is promising and can help us to streamline our work in a manner that will make the Assembly a more effective and relevant body in the interests of all Member States. The Main Committees should be rigorous and bold in the task of making recommendations for rationalizing items before 30 April 2005. They should clear away the detritus of years past and create space to address the contemporary challenges facing us all.

This year, we must also act to stem the vast flow of documents. There seems to be wide agreement that the United Nations produces far too many documents — at the behest of Member States — and that many of them are never read, but we have not yet acted. The idea that the President and Main Committee chairpersons would consolidate reporting requests at the end of each session is worth trying, and each of the Main Committees should curtail the quantity of documents they request. They could look at that in conjunction with their review of the agenda. A similar exercise is needed in the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiaries.

Finally, we must use the General Committee to manage more rigorously and effectively the work of the Assembly. Australia and New Zealand are members of the Committee this session and we look forward to assisting in that task.

Canada, New Zealand and Australia appreciate the work of the Secretary-General and his Panel on

United Nations-Civil Society Relations for their work on expanding and deepening the relationship between the United Nations and civil society.

As civil society organizations have grown in their scope and responsibilities at the global and local levels, they have become ever more important actors, possessing expertise, enthusiasm and networks across the global agenda. Participation by non-governmental organizations in intergovernmental processes can lead to better decisions, better outreach and more effective implementation, and collaboration with non-governmental organizations on the ground is essential for achieving our collective goals in development, humanitarian assistance and peace and security.

We therefore agree wholeheartedly with the Secretary-General that the United Nations and its major organs will benefit from interacting more extensively with civil society, and it is timely to consider how the Organization can best do so, rather than to continue as we presently are, on an ad hoc basis.

We look forward to discussing the proposals contained in the report in more detail at a subsequent time and would appreciate your advice, Sir, on how we will proceed. For now, I simply wish to comment on four of the proposals before us.

First, the Secretary-General's proposal to allow non-governmental organizations to participate in the work of the General Assembly could be another step on the path of revitalization. Without detracting from the fundamental, intergovernmental character of the Assembly, a greater dialogue with non-governmental organizations in formal and informal settings would be of value. We would, of course, need to define carefully the rights and responsibilities that we extend to non-governmental organizations. I note particularly the remarks of the Deputy Secretary-General in that context.

Secondly, the proposal for a single accreditation process, with a greater Secretariat role in screening applications for intergovernmental review, would be a sensible and welcome reform. Rather than maintaining different standards for the participation of non-governmental organizations in each intergovernmental body, a single system would be simpler and more efficient. If the General Assembly were to assume responsibility for conducting that process, then the General Committee would be the appropriate body to exercise the necessary functions.

Thirdly, we note the recommendations for strengthening links between the United Nations and national parliaments, but, like the European Union, are not convinced that the methods proposed are the most appropriate for engaging with parliaments. A mechanism already exists in the form of the relationship between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and we believe that it would be more appropriate to work within existing arrangements wherever possible, rather than to establish new mechanisms and processes.

Fourthly, the enlargement of the Partnerships Office appears to be a good institutional initiative to extend relations with non-governmental organizations and we look forward to considering the details of the proposal in the 2006-2007 budget.

Strengthening the United Nations is, of course, a process that has many aspects, and it is worth recalling here the importance of continuing progress towards making the Secretariat more effective, efficient and results-oriented.

The modest refinements to the budget process agreed last year were much less than Canada, New Zealand and Australia thought were necessary, but we are pleased to see that they have helped the Secretariat to prepare a more focused work plan for 2006-2007 and that some duplication has been eliminated. However, I have to say that we were disappointed — frankly, surprised — that the Committee for Programme and Coordination failed to reform itself and remains of negligible value. We need to keep working on that.

Results-based budgeting — an innovation from the Secretary-General's first round of reforms — continues to progress and is producing a greater focus on results and performance. Two steps are needed to take this further. First, a system of cost accounting will allow the Organization to tie results to resources and to determine how limited resources will be best utilized. Secondly, improved evaluation and performance reporting need to provide a stronger framework for accountability, improving results and better planning.

Finally, continued reform of human resources policies and practices is vital for strengthening the Organization and we must continue to consolidate and

extend the reforms introduced a few years ago. The work of the International Civil Service Commission on reviewing pay and conditions, strengthening performance and improving the management capabilities of managers is critical to the task of ensuring that the Organization can meet the challenges facing it.

In that regard, we welcome the report of the panel on the strengthening of the international civil service and look forward to building on its recommendations to improve the contribution of the International Civil Service Commission to the United Nations system.

Mr. Baali (Algeria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Working Group on Reform of the United Nations and Revitalization of the General Assembly. I shall limit my intervention to the question of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

NAM would like to express once again its appreciation for the leadership and commitment shown by the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, concerning the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Indeed, resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 — adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2003 and 1 July 2004 respectively — represent important steps for more substantive improvements towards a genuine revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

NAM is confident, Sir, that, under your presidency and with your wise guidance, Member States will continue their efforts to advance the process of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. NAM would like to recall that that ongoing process is aimed at enhancing the authority and role of the Assembly and at improving its efficiency and effectiveness so as to make it the central body of the Organization, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and paragraph 30 of the Millennium Declaration.

NAM looks forward to the follow-up to the provisions of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. In that context, NAM stresses the need to ensure the effective, full and proper implementation of those resolutions. NAM stresses that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a process, driven by Member States, that entails transparency and a clear distinction between the role of Member States and that of the Secretariat. The consultations on the revitalization of the work of the Assembly should be conducted in an inclusive manner, taking into account the views of the full membership, including those of the regional and negotiating groups.

NAM is of the view that the focus of our work during the fifty-ninth session should be on continuing the revitalization process within the framework of resolution 58/316. In that connection, NAM would like to highlight the following points.

First, with regard to reordering the work of the General Assembly, NAM stresses the need to take into account the views expressed and the suggestions made by Member States in the context of the deliberations held during the fifty-eighth session.

Secondly, regarding the organization of the agenda of the Assembly under headings corresponding to the priorities of the medium-term plan or the strategic framework, NAM would like to reiterate its position that that arrangement — which is to be reviewed in its entirety by the Assembly at its sixty-first session — is solely for the purpose of illustration and will neither prejudge nor adversely affect the way in which the work of the Assembly is organized and carried out, particularly regarding the format of sessions, the way in which agenda items are considered in plenary and other meetings and the way in which draft resolutions are introduced and action is taken on them.

Thirdly, concerning the practices and working methods of the Main Committees, NAM emphasizes that all of the Main Committees must be bound by the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, as stated in section C, paragraph 3, of the annex to resolution 58/316, and that all Member States must be actively involved in the process of implementing the various provisions of that section, including paragraph 3 (a), which states that each Main Committee shall make recommendations on the rationalization of its future agendas to the plenary Assembly for its decision by 1 April 2005.

Finally, with respect to documentation, NAM is of the view that the forthcoming discussions on that issue should be conducted in the light of the implementation of paragraph 7 of resolution 58/126 and paragraph 20 of resolution 57/300 and in accordance with the principle of providing adequate and sufficient information, as agreed by Member States.

NAM trusts, Sir, that under your presidency, the General Assembly will continue its efforts to ensure full implementation of the provisions of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 — including those related to the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, contained in section A of the annex to resolution 58/126 — thus enabling the Assembly to play its role effectively as "the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations", as stated in the Millennium Declaration.

Bearing in mind that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is an ongoing process that has as its main objective restoring the authority of the Assembly, NAM stresses the importance of paragraph 1 of the annex to resolution 55/285, which stipulates that:

> "Improvement of the procedures and working methods of the Assembly is only a first step towards more substantive improvements in and revitalization of the Assembly."

NAM believes that, from a methodological point of view, it would be more appropriate to focus during the current session on the implementation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 and to address, as a matter of priority, all outstanding issues.

At its sixtieth session, the General Assembly will review the whole issue in the context of its consideration of the comprehensive report requested from the Secretary-General in paragraph 3 of resolution 58/316. Such a review will provide Member States with an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved and to consider further steps and new measures that they deem necessary to advance the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

In closing, NAM would like to assure you, Mr. President, of its full support for your undertaking concerning the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Rio Group: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and my own country, Brazil. For the Group, the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a priority, as agreed by the Presidents of our member countries at their summit held in Cuzco, Peru. In the light of that mandate, the Rio Group actively participated in the negotiating process leading to the adoption of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316.

Permit me, Sir, to express the Group's appreciation for the efforts of your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, who, through his tenacity and dedication, gave fresh impetus to the process of the revitalization of the work of the Assembly and made an essential contribution to the success achieved. Thanks to his steadfast commitment to that cause, it was possible, among other things, to continue the effort of biennializing and triennializing the consideration of Assembly agenda items, to bring forward the election of the Bureaux of the Main Committees and to have an agenda organized according to the priorities in the medium-term plan. We are confident that, under your presidency, we shall be able to make yet more progress in that process, which is an essential part of the overall United Nations reform effort. The General Assembly must recover the ground it has lost.

Despite our best efforts during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, it was not possible to reach agreement on one of the main proposals under consideration, namely, the better use by the Main Committees of all the time available throughout the Assembly session. Given the restrictions on reconvening the Main Committee sessions and the resistance to having some of the Main Committees hold their sessions in the spring instead of in the fall, among other issues, it proved impossible to reach a consensus. Nonetheless, resolution 58/316 kept the issue on the Assembly's agenda and, as in the past, the Rio Group will continue actively to strive for results that allow for a more effective allocation of available time for the holding of the meetings of the Main Committees.

Paragraph 5 in part B of the annex to resolution 58/126 states,

> "It would be advantageous for the General Assembly to have a shorter agenda to ensure the fullest discussion of all issues, so that its decisions may have greater impact."

One option that could be considered in greater depth is the idea of differentiating the agenda of the General Assembly in general from its programme of work for each specific session, thus avoiding the need to eliminate items from the agenda. Further efforts are

also needed to ensure that the resolutions adopted by the Assembly are more concise, to the point and action-oriented, in keeping with that resolution.

The General Assembly now has to deal with some delicate questions about which it was not possible to reach agreement during the fifty-eighth session. The results achieved so far, however, indicate that, regardless of the obstacles, it is possible to make changes that have a direct bearing on the work of our Assembly. As previous experience clearly indicates, resolute and dedicated guidance from the President is crucial if tangible results are to be achieved in the revitalization process. In this regard, we are very pleased by your statements, Mr. President.

With regard to the strengthening of the United Nations system, we have before us reports prepared by the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, chaired by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former President of Brazil, as well as the report that the Secretary-General has prepared in response to it. We stand ready to consider the proposals contained in both of those documents throughout the session.

Among the proposals presented, we are pleased to note the Secretary-General's decision to create a fund, to which voluntary contributions could be made, to help representatives of non-governmental organizations from developing countries to attend intergovernmental meetings. The Rio Group will take part in the discussions on that issue, always bearing in mind the goal of promoting this integration in a manner that helps to strengthen the work of the Organization and other intergovernmental bodies.

You may rest assured, Mr. President, of the unswerving support of the members of the Rio Group in your efforts to promote the common cause of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): The issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system has been under discussion at the United Nations for several years. Some progress has been made but, obviously, much more needs to be done.

Certain broad-based perceptions circumscribe any consideration of the reform of the United Nations, whether the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly or the strengthening of the Security Council. One extreme view is that the work of the United Nations has been essentially reduced to three elements: peacekeeping, the coordination of humanitarian assistance and easing the passage of globalization. Another view is that the United Nations today has latent strengths that have indeed made it indispensable, not the least of which are its universality of membership and its extraordinary position as the central — indeed, the only — body for the cooperative management of the world's problems.

Another set of perceptions relates to the practical realization of what is achievable — that is, realpolitik. This revolves around the question of embarking on a process of radical change involving the amending of the Charter or simply maintaining the basic status quo through the so-called tinkering process to address issues of budget reform, streamlining the administration, et cetera.

It would appear that realpolitik has a hugely constraining hand. Be that as it may, Bangladesh believes that the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system cannot be set aside. It is vital that we forge ahead simultaneously in a number of areas. We can accomplish this through a concerted effort on the part of Member States. Agreeing to discuss item 52 and item 54 together is an important step in the right direction. We could explore similar opportunities in the work of the Main Committees through biennialization, triennialization, clustering and the elimination of agenda items. That would allow for more focused and in-depth discussions on issues of relevance, resulting in actionable outcomes.

We believe that the practice of holding a "question time" should also be introduced, in the most appropriate manner, in all of the Main Committees. That would enable a dynamic and candid exchange among representatives, United Nations staff, the representatives of the Secretary-General and special rapporteurs.

A key element is to improve the efficiency of the delivery system, particularly at the national level. Appropriate steps should be taken to better manage the human resources of the United Nations, its budgetary process, procurement procedure and monitoring and evaluation system.

We fully agree with the view that much of the current malaise in our system is due to an

overcrowded, repetitive and irrelevant agenda, a huge burden of documentation and the need for meaningful thematic focus on specific issues.

We believe that rationalization should be a continuous process, enabling the Member States to refocus themselves to respond adequately to changing realities. We are confident that the ongoing process will render the Assembly the central and supreme deliberative and policy-making body of the United Nations.

Bangladesh has been consistently endeavouring to contribute to this process in its modest way. As Chairman of the Second Committee for the fifty-eighth session, Bangladesh, along with the Bureau members, helped prepare recommendations for ensuring a more practical and coherent organization of work for future sessions of the Committee, allowing for better focus, visibility and participation. Many of those suggestions are reflected in section C of Assembly resolution 58/316.

We believe that in order to strengthen the United Nations system, the General Assembly should be made the focal point of our activities. Both the Charter of the United Nations and the Millennium Declaration refer to the central position of the Assembly.

At its fifty-eighth session the Assembly adopted a resolution inviting the Security Council to submit special, subject-oriented reports to the Assembly on issues of international concern. It asked the President of the Security Council to regularly brief the President of the General Assembly on the work of the Council and requested the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council to meet periodically with a view to ensuring increased cooperation, coordination and complementarity of the work programmes of the three organs. We urge the President of the General Assembly to put those recommendations into practice. We also call for further strengthening of the office of the President of the General Assembly, including the increase and the better management of its budget.

The United Nations has seen a dramatic evolution over more than five decades. Two forces have been pre-eminent. The first is mass awareness of individual rights, which is behind the progressive development of humanitarian laws and the strengthening of human rights. Secondly, advances in science and technology have brought the liberalization of market forces, mobility of labour, capital and business and the greater independence of all countries. The result has been globalization. Those forces have heralded new players in the international community: civil society, non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations and big cities. In short, this is the age of the non-State actors. There is a vital need to praise and assess their role.

For the United Nations to engage in debates on development issues in a more substantive way, we believe it must nurture a healthy relationship with civil society. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) today have a huge worldwide network. They are working with Governments at most levels of development, including planning and execution. The United Nations can certainly benefit by drawing upon the experiences of the NGOs.

We agree with the recommendation of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354) that the United Nations, in essence, should endeavour to make itself a more outward-looking organization. That can be done by encouraging the participation of various stakeholders in the development programmes in different ways. We believe that the role of the NGOs in the activities of the General Assembly, the Main Committees and the Security Council, however, should remain limited to a consultative role.

On the issue of reform of the Security Council, Bangladesh favours increasing the membership of the Council with a view to its democratization and in keeping with the increase in the United Nations membership. A simple rule of thumb is 10 per cent of United Nations membership. We believe that reform of the Council should be considered as a common package encompassing both the composition of its membership and its working methods. Our basic stand is to oppose the creation of new centres of privilege and to constrain the use of the veto, while recognizing the limitations in that direction. That view emanates from the realization that the fundamental goal of the reform exercise should be to enhance the legitimacy, credibility, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of the Council.

Efforts at reform, particularly the expansion of the Council, should not be bound by any imposed deadline. We believe that any such expansion should be addressed on the basis of well-defined criteria, the

foremost of which should be the track record and performance of the aspirant. That would be judged by the concerned country's commitment to the United Nations and its contribution to international peace and security, not merely by the benchmarks of national wealth and military power. That should ultimately translate into Member States taking greater responsibility in terms of financial resources and political support for efforts undertaken by the United Nations in the areas of peace, security and sustainable development.

Certain aspects, including a country's record in democracy and compliance with the United Nations resolutions, as well as its avowed commitment to disarmament, should also be taken into consideration.

Any reform of the Council should adequately reflect the interests of the smaller developing countries, which constitute a strong numerical block in the United Nations and therefore have a vital stake in an effective Council. In that regard, the case for the democratization of the Council should not be confined to the principle of regional representation alone. It should also include the principle of the rotational representation of various economic groupings in an expanded Security Council.

Arguably, the whole issue of reform of the Security Council involves many complexities that cannot be resolved in a piecemeal fashion. The ultimate aim of any reform exercise should be to enhance the credibility and the democratic nature of the United Nations through its working methods, its decision-making process and the very substance of its deliberations. It should not result merely in the creation of new centres of privilege.

Mrs. Musiviye (Namibia): Last Friday, the General Assembly concluded a rich general debate that was addressed by an impressive number of heads of State or Government. All collectively reaffirmed the precious ideals, purposes and principles of the United Nations and the need for United Nations reform to reassert the centrality of the United Nations in dealing with global problems.

It is therefore most appropriate that the present joint debate should start our plenary deliberations. Having had the rare privilege of presiding over the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, Namibia attaches great importance to this discussion. The revitalization of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system are complementarity and intertwined. A revitalized General Assembly will make the United Nations system effective. At the same time, a strengthened United Nations system will enhance the centrality of this important organ.

I wish to join others in commending the President of the General Assembly at is fifty-eighth session for his devotion to the issue of the revitalization of the Assembly. His commitment has taken this important issue to a higher level. It is now our duty to sustain the momentum and to bring the process to a meaningful conclusion.

We trust in your ability, Mr. President, to take the process forward, and you have our cooperation and support in this regard.

The representative of Algeria, speaking on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), clearly laid out the NAM position. My delegation associates itself with the position he just enunciated. Allow me, however, to make a few remarks on some aspects of the revitalization process. Streamlining the General Assembly agenda has been an ongoing process. In fact, some of the Main Committees have set the pace on the issue. In that context, a focused discussion among Member States will further enhance our work on this subject. In the meantime, the provisions of General Assembly resolution 58/316 are very clear and give us room to observe the practicality and suitability of rearranging the agenda of the Assembly.

We believe that what has worked well for the overwhelming majority of Member States as we continue with the process of revitalization should continue to work just as well. For example, the usefulness and necessity of having a general debate in each of the Main Committees should be viewed in the context of each Main Committee's work. Over the years, smaller delegations such as mine have strongly argued for the retention of this debate. Our arguments have been rightly centred on our limited capacities. However, there is another equally important aspect that we collectively tend to overlook. And since we are deliberating on how to revitalize the work of the Assembly, it is worth pointing out that general debates in the Main Committees are essential for the following reasons. First, they add content to the deliberations; secondly, they provide focus for the work of the

session; and thirdly, they set the overall tone for the Committee's work. The debates on substantive items, on the other hand, narrow it down, thus assisting in the preparation of draft resolutions.

We cannot adopt a uniform method for all the Committees. Therein lies the wisdom of leaving the modalities of rationalizing the work of each Main Committee to its own member States.

We welcome the remarks made by the Deputy Secretary-General in introducing the Secretary-General's report on strengthening of the United Nations system (A/59/354), and we wish to make the following preliminary comments on some aspects of the recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations.

The contribution of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the work of the United Nations is unquestionable. In our view, the participation of NGOs is not novel — at least, not for the General Assembly. However, the participation of non-governmental organizations has been unbalanced, in terms both of geographical representation and of accessibility to the United Nations system. Members will agree with me that accreditation and participation of NGOs are two different issues.

My delegation does not concur with the Panel on the merits of a single system of accreditation. Granted, we need to continue to seek more effective ways of carrying out our activities with the inclusion of all relevant partners. However, in doing so, we must examine in earnest whether the problem actually lies with the committee or the NGO, or with the seeming erosion of the intergovernmental character of our Organization.

We believe that, in considering the accountability of NGOs, the particularities of NGOs from developing countries need to be taken into account. It has been said, and rightly so, that different United Nations bodies require different types of reform or strengthening. At country level, for example, unique regulatory frameworks have to be taken into account. The participation of NGOs in operational activities at country level cannot be made uniform. While broad guidelines could be common, surely the modalities of operation will have to take into account the realities in given countries.

There is no doubt that the capacities of NGOs, especially those from developing countries, need to be enhanced to complement Government efforts in the development sphere. However, this must not detract from the fact that what is holding back the attainment of development goals is not a lack of effective coordination between Governments and non-governmental organizations but the lack of resources. The proposed trust fund is thus an idea worth considering. However, in view of the lack of resources for development, would it not be more useful if the trust fund could also complement the efforts of government in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, for example? The operational word here is "complement".

As I mentioned earlier, the contribution of NGOs to the work of our Organization is beyond doubt and is well documented. But, while we welcome their continued participation, we must not compromise the intergovernmental nature of our Organization, which derives from the Charter.

Finally, the revitalization of the General Assembly is the means to an end. During the previous session, the Non-Aligned Movement introduced a draft resolution, adopted as resolution 58/317, on reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international cooperation. While we seek to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, we need to establish how to enhance the role of the Assembly in this regard. Improving the working methods of the General Assembly will not in itself place the Assembly at the centre. Perhaps the time is fast approaching for us to look at the authority of this most deliberative and most representative organ of the United Nations.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Sir, it is my pleasure to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. It is particularly gratifying to see a distinguished son of Africa leading this body at such an important session. I wish to pledge the fullest cooperation of South Africa with you in the year ahead.

Please allow me to thank and congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, for his effective leadership of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I wish to pay special tribute to Foreign Minister Hunte for his efforts on one of the

items before us today, namely, the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

I would also like to associate myself with the statement made by Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation is fully committed to improving the working methods and the effectiveness of the General Assembly, both its Committees and the plenary. We believe that the purpose of the proposed reform is to enhance the effectiveness and the substance of the work of those bodies. For the past couple of years our delegation has had the honour to assist in the facilitation of the revitalization process. During that period we have seen Member States take decisions on a number of issues, which have already made a significant improvement in the work of our Organization. Already, there is a fixed date for the annual commencement of the general debate. The President of the General Assembly and the Chairpersons and other officers of the Main Committees are elected early so that they can prepare for their tasks in good time. The General Committee has also been engaged in discussing and deciding on the revitalization process, giving the General Committee a continuing role in the process of helping strengthen the Assembly.

At its fifty-eighth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 58/316, in which Member States were able to reach consensus on further reforms designed to revitalize the work of this body. They included the decision to schedule plenary meetings on Mondays and Thursdays, so as to make the work of the whole General Assembly session predictable. That decision has also made it possible for the Committees to better structure their schedules so as to avoid clashes with plenary meetings. In addition, certain Committees have begun implementing some of the proposals made in the resolution as a way of enhancing their work. In coming weeks, we look forward to comparing the revitalization experiences of different Committees as a way of distilling and replicating best practices, wherever possible.

However, there is still more to be done if the General Assembly is to live up to its description in the Millennium Declaration as "the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations" (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*).

Among the outstanding matters raised in resolution 58/316 is the issue of documentation, in particular the volume of documentation. We believe that documentation has a direct impact on the work of the General Assembly and its Committees and my delegation is ready to participate in discussions on that issue.

Regarding the strengthening of the United Nations, we wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, which was chaired by the former President of Brazil, Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

South Africa places a very high premium on the role and contribution that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other elements of civil society can play and have played in many aspects of society. For that reason, we believe that such organizations have an important role to play in analysing, evaluating and shaping the world we live in at all levels. It is therefore important for the United Nations to enhance its cooperation with that very important sector of society; we believe that the report of the Secretary-General contains a number of practical and useful suggestions that should be pursued further.

While it may go without saying, we concur with the Secretary-General's re-emphasis of the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations, where decisions are taken by its Member States. However, Member States should be able to draw on the best and most up-to-date information on which to base their discussions and decisions; civil society can play an important contributing role in that regard. Civil society also continues to highlight topics and to develop the debate around important local, national and global issues. With that in mind, we agree that ways should be found to maximize the contribution that civil society can make to the work of all the bodies of the United Nations, including the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Speaking from my experience as Chairman of the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on Guinea-Bissau and on Burundi, our interaction with civil society in those countries made a significant contribution to the Economic and Social Council's understanding of both the challenges faced by those countries and of the different approaches available in dealing with countries emerging from

conflict. I was thus pleased that during its recent visit to West Africa, the Security Council mission also made a particular point of interacting with civil society organizations in the countries that they visited, a fact mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

While those country-level interactions are extremely helpful, it is admittedly not possible to have the same level of contribution from developing-country civil society organizations in the work of the United Nations here in New York. We are therefore very glad to see that the Secretary-General will create a trust fund to provide financial support to enable accredited NGOs from developing countries to attend United Nations meetings. We hope that donors will contribute generously to the trust fund, as that would be a tangible way to demonstrate the importance that we attach to the contribution of civil society.

We all have seen the significant contribution that civil society organizations can make to the work of the United Nations during summits and other high-level meetings. That was demonstrated very clearly again to us in Johannesburg, during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in which civil society participated fully both in the preparatory process and the Summit itself. Since the Johannesburg Summit, civil society has continued to contribute significantly to enriching the debate and to discussions on carrying out the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

The Secretary-General has also highlighted the need to find ways to review the accreditation of NGOs as a way to maximize their participation in the work of the United Nations. My delegation believes that this is an important issue, and we look forward to exchanging ideas with other delegations on this matter.

In conclusion, the fact that we are addressing the revitalization of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system together is an admission that a lot of work needs to be done. If we consider the agreement reached in resolution 58/316, there seems to be a consensus that we have not yet reached the end of the road of the revitalization process. And in addressing the strengthening of the General Assembly, it is clear that that cannot happen through the efforts of Member States alone. We need to maintain a balance between our enthusiasm to improve the working methods of the Organization and discussions of the actual substantive matters that we have to deal with in the Committees and in plenary meetings. My delegation believes that that can only happen as we continue to address these issues in the coming months.

Mr. Aboul Atta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and to endorse the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. We would also like, once again, to express our satisfaction with the role played by the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session in guiding the consultations that led to the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. We also look forward to working with you, Mr. President, during the present session on these items.

Egypt is convinced that the major objective of the revitalization of the General Assembly is an important one: to ensure that, in the relevant areas, the Assembly plays its role as a principal organ of the United Nations. We must never lose sight of that objective. Egypt is firmly convinced that the revitalization of the General Assembly must not be short-circuited or limited to a simple procedural rationalization of the Assembly's deliberations. While we attach particular importance to this matter, we also think that we should consider the question of the General Assembly's relationships with the other United Nations organs and develop those relationships in an effort to achieve the most effective formulas that would enhance the authority, efficiency and role of the General Assembly.

At its sixtieth session, the General Assembly will deal with the question of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the comprehensive reform of the United Nations. That should provide a unique opportunity for us to advance in our collective international action to enhance the role of the General Assembly and strengthen multilateralism and democracy in international relations.

We in the Non-Aligned Movement therefore believe that, at the present session, we should consider carefully the comprehensive implementation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 and the elements that have already been implemented. We believe that this work should be transparent and should fully include all the regional and other negotiating groups, based on the principle that it is the Member States that are responsible for reforming the United Nations and, in

particular, for revitalizing the General Assembly. This must take place on the basis of a painstaking definition of the roles of all those involved in the discussions. We will support your efforts, Mr. President, and will cooperate with you as you exercise prudent leadership, in a spirit of partnership and collegiality, to ensure that we succeed in this process.

I turn now to the issue of strengthening of the United Nations system and its relationship with the civil society. We have examined the Secretary-General's report (A/59/354) on this matter, and we listened attentively to the presentation made today by the Deputy Secretary-General. Here, I thank the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, chaired by former President Cardoso of Brazil. My thanks go also to the Secretary-General. Egypt has always sought to strengthen dialogue with non-governmental organizations, not only because of their role in articulating society's conscience, but because of the constructive role they play in promoting the issues of civil society, to the benefit of all people.

Based on the growing importance of this matter of strengthening the role of the United Nations and revitalizing its organs, the delegation of Egypt has studied the report very carefully with a view to its implementation. We wish also to understand all the responsibilities and repercussions stemming from the implementation of the report's proposals on strengthening the United Nations system. We would like to ascertain what the implications will be for our societies and to ensure that we act in a manner compatible with the intergovernmental nature of the Organization and its Charter.

Mr. Noghes (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): The Principality of Monaco welcomed the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 58/316, which was an important first step towards revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. We take this opportunity, Mr. President, to welcome the work done in this area by your predecessor.

The delegation of Monaco supports the effort to reform the United Nations organ in which all Member States may express their views. In the annex to resolution 58/126, the General Assembly reaffirmed that the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the Millennium Declaration lay at the heart of its concerns.

The Monegasque delegation greatly appreciates, in this regard, the rearrangement of the agenda, which is now clustered around headings that correspond to the Organization's priorities. Rationalizing the agenda in keeping with the medium-term plan for 2002 to 2005 or the strategic framework of the General Assembly will give Member States the opportunity to focus their efforts on areas in which they are most competent. Small delegations such as ours will in this way be able to make a more significant contribution to the work of the Assembly.

The measures that we have adopted are nonetheless modest in scope. The General Committee's role needs to be strengthened as regards the effectiveness of the Organization and the coordination and management of its work. The representative nature of the General Committee gives Member States a guarantee that the Secretariat will take their views into consideration.

We warmly welcome the practice of holding interactive debates and group discussions within the Main Committees, as well as question-and-answer meetings involving representatives of Member States, department officials and special rapporteurs. Such informal exchanges of views will promote both dynamism and transparency.

The sense of urgency that should push us to undertake the upcoming measures to revitalize the Assembly is as great as that which in September 2003 prompted the Secretary-General to create the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. The recent and simultaneous upsurge in non-traditional threats such as terrorism, organized crime and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction on the one hand and the insufficient or patchy progress in reducing poverty on the other hand make it necessary for the United Nations to adapt rapidly to the new world context. Like the eminent persons of the Panel, we need to formulate bold proposals, setting out a convincing agenda: a set of responses that can deal with the world's problems. It is up to us to give the General Assembly the authority it deserves and to strengthen the role that falls to it, that of representing the international community and, fundamentally, the peoples of the world.

In that regard, we have taken note of the recommendations made by the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations,

because, as its Chairman, President Cardoso, has noted, the growth in civil society's influence is one of the major events of our time. We share the view that the United Nations should welcome the contributions of relevant non-governmental organizations in the context of their deliberations. We continue to believe that we should be able to avoid repetitive debates and certain repetitive resolutions and to devote ourselves to implementing and honouring the commitments that we have already undertaken.

Mr. President, we are convinced that you will be able to conduct our work successfully and that we will thus make substantive progress before the end of the session.

Mr. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry (Pakistan): I wish to begin, Sir, by extending to you our congratulations on your assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly and by assuring you of our fullest cooperation during your term of office. We would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for presenting the report of the Secretary General (A/59/354) this morning.

Pakistan fully supports the efforts to revitalize the General Assembly in order to strengthen its role as the chief deliberative organ of the United Nations. However, our efforts will not yield the desired result unless we focus on both enhancing the Assembly's efficiency and restoring its rightful authority.

In that regard, last year Pakistan's delegation presented a set of ideas for the revitalization of the General Assembly. One idea, which continues to remain valid, bears repetition: enhancing the Assembly's role is a political, not a procedural exercise. All Member States would need to demonstrate their resolve and political commitment to ensuring that the Assembly becomes the primary locus of the discussions and actions of the United Nations. The Member States will also need to commit themselves to observing and implementing the Assembly's resolutions.

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement of Algeria made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement countries on agenda item 52. We endorse the call for the provisions contained in resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 to be fully implemented. We believe that consensual decision-making should be the guiding principle in making progress on the important issues under consideration, including reflection of the priorities of the Organization in the agenda of the General Assembly, the reordering of the Assembly's work, and the working methods of the Main Committees.

We would like to draw the Assembly's attention to an important provision of resolution 58/126, which calls for greater interaction between the Presidents of the three principal organs of the United Nations. We believe that greater coordination and coherence in the work of those three organs will bring synergy to our work and add to the central role of the General Assembly, as envisaged in the Charter and reflected in the Millennium Declaration.

In that context, we welcome the regular meetings of the Presidents of the three organs instituted by the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, to discuss issues common to the agenda of the three organs. We would like to take this opportunity to recall Pakistan's proposal of establishing ad hoc composite committees with membership drawn from the three main organs in order to address complex emergencies. That idea has already been discussed at the meeting of the three Presidents. We hope that the proposal will be further reflected upon in the context of bringing about greater vitality and synergy in the work of the three principal organs of the United Nations.

In the context of discussions on agenda item 54, we would like to state that Pakistan attaches high importance to strengthening the United Nations system. In that regard, Pakistan has welcomed the establishment of the High-Level Panel to examine the major threats and challenges to international peace and security and to make recommendations for a collective response. We believe that the strengthening of the United Nations system should be based on cooperative multilateralism pursued mainly through the United Nations and based on United Nations Charter principles. United Nations reform should not come at the cost of United Nations principles.

We shall offer our specific views on different aspects of United Nations reform under the relevant agenda items. At today's meeting, we would simply like to say that cooperative multilateralism and a strengthened United Nations can be realized only if the General Assembly is enabled to play its role as the supreme organ of the Organization, to which the membership of the more restricted organs, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, is

answerable and accountable. Furthermore, the strengthening of the United Nations system cannot yield the desired results so long as the United Nations and its family of organizations continue to be denied adequate financial resources to perform the myriad and growing tasks with which those organizations are now being entrusted.

We would now like to offer a few comments on the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations-civil society relations. Pakistan regards civil society as an integral part of the political, social and economic fibre of contemporary societies. The wider participation of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is now vital to ensuring the success of international cooperation, especially in the field of socio-economic uplift and the advocacy of the rights of the vulnerable segments of societies.

The evolution of civil society in the past decades and its increased participation in United Nations activities warrants a fresh look at the institutional structure if that interaction is to afford a meaningful partnership between the two. It is in that context that, two years ago, the Pakistan delegation extended its full support to the proposal of the Secretary-General, contained in his report in document A/57/387, to strengthen the interaction between the United Nations and civil society.

We have taken note of the proposals made by the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. The report contains a number of useful ideas and suggestions. However, we believe that the changes that we may institute need our careful consideration, particularly their financial, legal and procedural implications. While we would pursue the matter in greater detail during informal discussions, at this stage we would like to offer a few general observations.

First, there is a need to clearly define the rights and responsibilities of non-governmental organizations for their participation in the General Assembly, bearing in mind the need to preserve the Assembly's intergovernmental nature. Secondly, the process of accreditation must continue to be regulated through intergovernmental consideration and decisions. We agree that there is a need to streamline the accreditation process. In that regard, we would need to evaluate whether the shifting of the responsibility for the accreditation of non-governmental organizations from the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to the General Committee would achieve the desired efficiency. Thirdly, due respect has to be shown for the local laws, values and cultural ethos of the country concerned when strengthening role of civil society in United Nations-sponsored activities in that particularly country. Equally important is the need to ensure that programmes to enhance the capacity of NGOs at the country level are undertaken with the concurrence and full involvement of the host authorities. Fourthly, initiatives for the increased involvement of NGOs need to be accompanied by the generation of additional funds, rather than by a mere reappropriation of the existing development funds.

In conclusion, Pakistan supports the strengthening of the relationship between the United Nations and civil society. However, we believe that the exercise should not in any manner erode the Assembly's intergovernmental nature or challenge the primacy of the Member States at the United Nations.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting.

The revitalization of the General Assembly is an important part of the reform of the United Nations. The Chinese delegation has always supported the revitalization of the General Assembly with a view to expanding the influence of the Organization and to promoting multilateralism.

At its last session, the General Assembly unanimously adopted two important resolutions on its own revitalization that fully reflected the common understanding of all parties. We expect that, under your leadership, Sir, the revitalization of the General Assembly will remain a major priority at this session, the healthy momentum will be maintained and further results achieved. The Chinese delegation is prepared to join with every member of the General Assembly in giving its full support to your work.

We are of the view that there already exists a very good foundation framework for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. The first priority now is to implement resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. In that regard, I would stress the following three points.

First, with respect to strengthening the authority and role of the General Assembly, the annex of resolution 58/126 invites the Security Council to

submit periodically special subject-oriented reports to the General Assembly on issues of current international concern and to continue with initiatives to improve the quality of its annual report to the General Assembly. As one of the permanent members of the Security Council, China will work actively in the Council to accomplish those two tasks.

Secondly, with respect to improving the agendas and documentation of the General Assembly and the Main Committees, in compliance with resolution 58/316, the Secretary-General promptly submitted a General Assembly agenda in document A/58/864, clustering items according to the medium-term plan. We express our appreciation in that regard. We expect the Main Committees to make their recommendations to the Assembly on the rationalization of their agendas before 1 April 2005. We also expect the Secretariat to submit an updated note on control and limitation of documentation to the General Committee for its consideration so that it can make its recommendations to the Assembly at an early date.

Thirdly, in accordance with resolution 58/316, the General Committee should continue to consider the question of improving its working methods and make recommendations on the matter to the Assembly before 1 April 2005. We hope that the General Committee will promptly study this issue and come up with ideas on how to improve its working methods, including ways and means to further rationalize the procedure for considering the agenda of the Assembly so as to improve the Assembly's efficiency and effectiveness.

Next year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. The General Assembly will convene a summit meeting to commemorate the event and make a number of decisions on important questions. The summit's success depends on careful prior preparations. The current Assembly session faces an enormous task in that regard. In order to revitalize the Assembly, while no effort should be spared to implement resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, we should also give comprehensive consideration to other relevant issues related to the reform of the United Nations in order to promote the revitalization of the Assembly.

The Chinese delegation has also taken note of the report by the Secretary-General concerning the expanded participation of civil society in the United Nations (A/59/354). We thank the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, under the leadership of Mr. Cardoso, for its efforts. We support the consideration of the expanded participation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in the United Nations. We will join others in taking a positive and open approach for the in-depth study of this question.

The Chinese delegation believes that the expanded participation of civil society is necessary for the United Nations to meet the requirements of our age, and the issue should be given thorough consideration in relation to the reform of the United Nations. Reflection on the expanded participation of civil society should fully consider the useful practices and experience of the non-governmental organizations that have participated in the work of the United Nations over the last 60 years. The views of relevant parties, including non-governmental organizations, should be solicited on relevant reform measures, which should be implemented progressively.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): Today, the General Assembly is to discuss the critical issues of our time: the strengthening of the United Nations system and the revitalization of the General Assembly. I take it that placing these issues immediately following the close of the general debate indicates the importance that you, Mr. President, attach to the reform of the United Nations. I would like to pay tribute to your initiative in that regard.

With its universal membership and broad mandate, the United Nations plays an important and unique role that no other international organization can fulfil. However, in the face of the new threats and challenges emerging in the international community today, the United Nations system must be reformed and strengthened in order to maintain its relevance and effectiveness. As Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan said in his statement in the general debate on 21 September, we need a strong and effective United Nations; we must, in effect, create a new United Nations for the new era.

In that connection, the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change is under way. Its report, expected to be completed this December, will be the product of the collective wisdom of the highly esteemed members of the Panel. We are looking forward to the Panel's insightful analysis of, and innovative suggestions for solutions to, the threats and

the challenges we are now facing. Nevertheless, it is the Member States that have the final responsibility to make political decisions on the ways and means to strengthen the United Nations system. Therefore, it is imperative that we, the Member States, start seriously to consider how best to improve the existing United Nations system and better adapt it to today's needs.

That is a task in which we cannot afford to fail. Unless we succeed, the United Nations will fall behind the times and gradually lose its relevance as an effective organization. It is our responsibility to reform and strengthen the United Nations so that it can effectively fulfil its objectives in the face of such emerging challenges and threats, as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, poverty, environmental degradation and the spread of HIV/AIDS and other pandemics.

Reforms are needed throughout the United Nations system. Part VIII of the Millennium Declaration lays out the various areas in which the United Nations needs to be strengthened. Among other requirements, the central position of the General Assembly must be reaffirmed; our efforts to achieve comprehensive reform of the Security Council must be intensified; the Economic and Social Council must be further strengthened; and the Secretariat must be urged to make the best use of its resources. Japan is of the view that the core of all our efforts must be the reform of the Security Council. I will elaborate subsequently on our views on those individual issues under the relevant agenda items. Today, I would like to touch upon some issues related to the revitalization of the General Assembly, as well as budgetary and administrative affairs.

The President at the fifty-eighth session, Julian Hunte, regarded General Assembly revitalization as one of the priority issues of his term of office. During his tenure, the Assembly adopted two significant resolutions, 58/126 and 58/316. I welcome the adoption of those two resolutions as a useful step towards the revitalization of the Assembly. What must follow now is for Member States faithfully to implement those resolutions.

Prior to the opening of the current session, we elected the President and the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, the Chairpersons and the full Bureaux of the Main Committees in early June, as stipulated in resolution 58/126. The transfer of duties from the outgoing to the incoming bureaux was carried out in an institutionalized manner, with the incoming officials thus enabled to make the necessary preparations for their duties in advance. Therefore, I believe, we have made a good start at the current session in securing the continuity of discussions to take place during future sessions and in maintaining the momentum for further reforms.

During the consultations on those resolutions, we considered the possibility of rescheduling the work of the Main Committees over two substantive periods during the session. We have learned, however, that it would be very difficult to realize such an arrangement. It was pointed out that, because the conferences, activities and events, both at Headquarters and outside New York, are interrelated, reorganizing their working schedules would be an immensely complicated task. Some Member States also argued that the work of the Main Committees should not be separated from the general debate, a point which, I believe, has merit. In order to reduce the congestion of the work schedule, opening the general debate in early September is an alternative that is worth exploring.

What is most urgent and important, however, is the rationalization and streamlining of our work agenda — the key factor in improving the efficiency of our work. I am convinced that not only small-sized delegations, but all of us would benefit from further rationalization and streamlining of the agenda.

In that connection, we are glad that the two resolutions deal extensively with issues concerning the agenda. It is my hope that the new agenda, organized on the basis of the resolutions, will help us to better structure our work and eventually to raise our productivity.

In addition, the General Assembly carried out a long overdue review of the agenda, and the resulting elimination of two agenda items was certainly a good step forward. We need to continue the process of rationalizing and streamlining the agenda. Each Main Committee will work on the rationalization of its agenda during the session. I hope that they will come up with bold and substantive results.

In order to realize a new United Nations for the new era and to steadily implement activities as intended, the United Nations needs the backing of resources. We need firm commitments on the part of Member States to foot the bill for projects and

activities that are agreed to be vital in enabling the United Nations to meet new threats and challenges.

However, it is also necessary to recognize the fact that the capacities of Member States to pay is limited. Therefore, we must ensure that the United Nations further rationalizes its budget through strict prioritization of its activities. Reallocating resources from outdated activities to our new priorities is crucial. It is also essential that the Secretariat be accountable to the Member States regarding the resource requirements for each activity and its performance. It is also important to determine whether the burden is fairly distributed among Member States.

In order for the United Nations to remain an effective system of world governance, the obligations and rights of its Member States need to be balanced. If the United Nations were to be perceived as losing legitimacy and fairness in that respect, it would become difficult to retain the wholehearted support of Member States. In that regard we believe that the current scale of assessments needs to be adjusted to be more balanced, taking into account each country's status and level of responsibility within the United Nations.

The strengthening of the United Nations system requires firm commitment and dedication on the part of each Member State. Japan is prepared to do its utmost in order to make a significant contribution to the process.

Mr. Siv (United States of America): The United States has a long tradition of supporting civil society participation at the local, national and international levels, and in particular, within the United Nations. We welcome the Secretary-General's initiative in establishing the panel led by President Cardoso. We salute President Cardoso for his leadership. In public life he has worked to create an environment in which civil society can flourish; as a private citizen he embodies the power of civil society to promote positive change.

We are studying the report carefully. While it is not possible at this time to respond fully to all suggestions, the United States would like to present its preliminary reactions.

First, we strongly agree that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide valuable input into the work of the United Nations. NGOs are advocates and programme implementers at all levels of society. They bring a grass-roots perspective, which enhances the work of the United Nations in the social, economic and humanitarian spheres. However, a compelling case has not been made that this relationship must be broadened from the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly.

Consistent with the United Nations Charter, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies have been — and continue to be — the appropriate venues for the kind of meaningful NGO participation that the report rightly extols. We believe that NGOs have ample opportunities to participate in the functional commissions of the Council, as well as in United Nations conferences under existing arrangements.

The United States requests further clarification on the establishment of a single trust fund for NGOs. That relates in particular to the replacement of established funds, and the legal and funding issues that would arise.

So long as responsibilities are not transferred from the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly, we warmly welcome any improvements to the NGO accreditation process. We support the proposals to improve the dialogue between the Secretariat and NGOs. We also encourage country-level engagement with NGOs. Initiatives to facilitate the inclusion and implementation of local points of view into the functional commissions should be explored.

In light of the report, we would like to reiterate our support for civil-society participation in the United Nations system through the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies. We agree with the Panel that multi-stakeholder partnerships are an important tool for addressing the challenges before us. While we are still reviewing the specific proposals, we welcome efforts to foster such partnerships. In particular, we acknowledge the innovative work done by the Commission on Sustainable Development in its role as a focal point for partnerships that promote sustainable development.

Mr. Gatan (Philippines): The Philippine delegation is elated, Sir, to note your resolve to give priority to the unfinished task of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly, as mentioned in your

statement at the opening of the Assembly's fifty-ninth session.

May I, at the outset, state that my delegation associates itself with the statement of Algeria, made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, on agenda item 52 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

The task of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly, entrusted for implementation to the fifty-eighth session as mandated by General Assembly resolution 58/126, was regrettably not fully completed. We managed to partially implement the reforms sought under that resolution. Although resolution 58/126 was a collective product, adopted by consensus, we were unable to fully live up to the commitment made. That could give rise to criticism that we adopted a rhetorical or nonchalant attitude towards the resolution, which could strengthen the belief of critics that we continue to lack a genuine desire to improve and strengthen the General Assembly.

We must prove the critics wrong. We should demonstrate that the General Assembly is not fast becoming irrelevant and ineffective in the discharge of its mandate as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations, by concluding, during the current session, the full implementation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. We must exercise the needed flexibility, and we must not be hamstrung by narrow national or group interests.

The principle that form follows function should always guide us in revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. The test of the relevance and effectiveness of working methods is whether or not they contribute to the effective and efficient performance of goals and objectives.

A salient substantive point of consideration on the work of the General Assembly — a past concern that continues in the present — is the implementation of many resolutions. The General Assembly has a brilliant record of producing resolutions and decisions, but, as regards the implementation of those resolutions, its performance does not seem encouraging.

Our agreement to simplify the formulation of resolutions — which henceforth will be terse and action-oriented — is an example of how form follows function. My delegation hopes that, as a result of this agreement, our future resolutions will be so simplified that they will enable the general public to understand what we decide here and to assess whether we did what we promised to do. This guide aimed at improving the quality of resolutions so that our peoples — who are ultimately the beneficiaries of our work — can better appreciate them and assess their performance represents significant progress in improving the work of the General Assembly.

Unlike other organs of the United Nations, the General Assembly does not report to a higher body, being the chief policy-making body itself. In addition, its decisions are not binding. However, we should not forget that our actions are scrutinized by our peoples, who have the final say as to whether or not the General Assembly is relevant to their concerns and effective in the advancement of their interests.

Resolution 58/126 also calls for consultations among the three main United Nations organs — the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council — in order to enhance coordination on common concerns. There has been compliance in that regard, but it has left much to be desired, since no substantive coordination is reported to have arisen from such consultations. This is an area that deserves further review so that we can reap the benefits from such consultations. Likewise, there should be prompt reporting of their outcomes for consideration by the general membership.

In conclusion, my delegation recognizes the difficulties of introducing significant reforms in the work of the General Assembly, which have become ingrained in the nearly 60 years of its existence. My delegation believes that, notwithstanding the slow pace of the implementation of the recommendations of resolution 58/126, important positive steps have already been agreed upon. In that regard, my delegation wishes to stress the importance of maintaining our collective resolve to swiftly and effectively carry out what we have resolved to accomplish: the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for the report (A/59/354) before us today for consideration. We highly value the strong commitment and the efforts of His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, in further revitalizing the work of the General Assembly during that session.

My delegation wishes to align itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on Reform of the United Nations and Revitalization of the General Assembly.

My delegation fully recognizes the vital importance of the process of reform initiated by the Secretary-General, which has been under way for nearly a decade now. The success of that process of reform is crucial if the United Nations is to play its role more effectively in the light of the many new and major challenges and threats — including war and armed conflict, hunger, poverty, terrorism and the spread of deadly diseases — facing the nations of the world today.

We have noted with satisfaction that, according to the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1), approximately 85 per cent of the reform packages proposed in 1997 and 2002 have been either fully or partly implemented. I wish to assure the Secretary-General, the Secretariat and all other delegations of our full cooperation in carrying on that important endeavour.

My delegation believes that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly remains among the most essential elements of the process of United Nations reform and therefore should be accorded continued priority. Efforts must be taken to enable the General Assembly to play its role as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, as stated in the Millennium Declaration by heads of State or Government in 2000.

We particularly welcome the adoption of two new resolutions — resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 — that put forth specific measures and proposals in that regard. Such measures as the periodical submission by the Security Council of special subject-oriented reports to the General Assembly for its consideration, on issues of current international concern; regular briefings by the President of the Security Council to the President of the General Assembly on the work of the Council; and periodic meetings among the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council to discuss ways to improve cooperation and coordination are highly worthwhile.

In his four special reports (A/59/CRP.3, 4, 5 and 6), the Secretary-General provides useful information and detailed analysis on the working methods of the Main Committees, the conceptualization of the agenda of the General Assembly, the priorities of the Organization and the reordering of the work of the Assembly. We support the option to reschedule the work of the Main Committees over two substantive periods during the session rather than the current three-month period, because that would help to reduce the burden on the small- and medium-sized missions and allow them to participate more effectively in meetings and consultations. However, given the different nature and scope of each Committee, my delegation is of the view that it would be best for each Committee to examine and decide its own working methods.

While positive progress has been made in certain areas, my delegation is cognizant of the problem of the delay in implementation and the non-implementation of resolutions related to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. We pledge to join coordinated actions to address this situation.

Right from the start, when the process of reform of the United Nations was put in place, not only the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, but also the reform of the Security Council has always been high on the agenda, perhaps the subject of the most serious debates and proposals. In 2000, at the Millennium Summit, our leaders called for comprehensive reform. This is a very important issue indeed. The events of the past few years have made it even more so.

What my delegation wishes to emphasize here is that, while pushing ahead on efforts to reform the Security Council, we must not forget that strengthening the United Nations system calls for reform and revitalization of the work of all of its main bodies. We must not lose sight of the need to strengthen the Economic and Social Council, whose work is of paramount importance to all countries, especially developing countries, and whose work and methods of deliberation have revealed serious flaws. In that connection, we fully support the initiatives aimed at strengthening the Economic and Social Council's role as the mechanism for system-wide coordination in social and economic matters, especially with other international institutions such as the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, in order to make the Council more effective in addressing the development agenda of the United Nations.

In his report in document A/59/354, the Secretary-General makes a number of concrete suggestions for increasing the participation of non-governmental organizations in intergovernmental bodies, including suggestions for their involvement in the work of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. My delegation recognizes the significant contributions by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the cause of economic and social development in many developing countries, ours among them. We recognize, as well, their contributions to the work of our Organization. My delegation holds the view that these concrete suggestions should be studied and considered carefully by Member States so as to ensure not only the increased participation of NGOs, but also the avoidance of abuse by those engaging in illegitimate, politically-motivated activities against sovereign Member States, as we have often witnessed. We support the proposal to draw up a code of conduct for NGOs that participate in United Nations activities, with a view to ensuring their responsibility and accountability.

The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system are aimed at making the United Nations stronger and more effective in facing and responding to both traditional and new global threats and challenges. Resolution 58/269, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", and resolution 58/317, entitled "Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international cooperation", were adopted by the General Assembly with an overwhelming majority last August and gave new impetus to our endeavours. We hope that our debate today will help unite our minds and bring us closer to our common goal.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): There is no need to dwell here on the importance that Switzerland attaches to a strong and effective United Nations that is capable of taking up the challenges presented by the modern world, especially in the fields of security, respect for human rights and sustainable development in all its aspects. The continuing reform process of the United Nations is one of the keys that will allow us to achieve this objective and to forge a more effective multilateralism.

The Secretary-General wishes to revitalize this process of reform by establishing two review panels of high-level experts. Switzerland welcomes this innovative approach and is looking forward to studying the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change in December. We are pleased today to be able to respond to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations.

Switzerland has noted with great interest the contents of the Cardoso report on civil society relations and supports the thrust of the Secretary-General's proposals. My country is open to the participation of civil society and we believe that the United Nations would strengthen its legitimacy by involving civil society more in its work.

Encouraging partnerships is undoubtedly one way of strengthening the United Nations: partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations, as well as parliaments, non-governmental organizations and private companies.

Within the framework of specific measures to strengthen the interaction between civil society and the United Nations, Switzerland supports the proposal by the Secretary-General to organize interactive meetings with non-governmental organizations and parliamentarians before important events are held. We therefore support the idea of testing the feasibility of such meetings by holding one before the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS, which is to be held on 2 June 2005.

Relations with civil society should not be constrained by a bureaucratic and centralized approach. The ability of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes to manoeuvre and take initiatives should be preserved, while maintaining positive existing practices. In this context, Switzerland would like to emphasize the interest that exists in initiatives developed in this field in Geneva, in some cases over a period of several decades. My country is therefore willing to study the formal and informal modes of interaction that take place in Geneva between civil society, NGOs and the United Nations, and to select the best practices and lessons learned in this area and share them with interested actors.

As for the establishment of the Partnerships Office, we take note of the progress made in setting it

up, and we would appreciate it if the concept of such an office could be developed further by the Secretariat.

Moreover, Switzerland reiterates its belief that the Global Compact must remain completely autonomous. The specific nature of its activity vis-à-vis companies, which it tries to convince of the fundamental values of the United Nations in the fields of human rights, social rights, protection of the environment and the fight against corruption, requires that it should retain maximum independence.

For Switzerland, the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a cornerstone of the United Nations reform process. The Assembly needs to recover its central role and should operate more effectively and more efficiently. A very important step in this direction was taken in July, with the adoption of resolution 58/316 on the improvement of the Assembly's working methods. We are pleased that the majority of the measures proposed are now being implemented.

Mr. President, at this point I would like to pay tribute to the work of your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, without whose perseverance we would probably not have achieved such results. We have every confidence that you will continue his efforts in the same direction and with the same success, in particular on the central issue that still remains open for the fifty-ninth session — that of the General Assembly schedule.

I would like to make some observations on this last point. Switzerland is not convinced of the added value of distributing the work of the Main Committees throughout the session. Such dispersal of work could encourage the postponement of decisions and lead to a prolongation of sessions or even to a need for more plenary meetings, which would involve additional costs. Moreover, the question of synchronization with the budgetary cycle has not yet been resolved.

Switzerland wishes to stress that it advocates the successive holding of meetings of the six Main Committees from the beginning of September to the end of December. Such a solution would afford all Committees the same weight and importance and encourage synergies among them.

In the course of this fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Switzerland intends to continue to support and to make its contribution to the revitalization process of the Assembly and to the strengthening of the United Nations in general.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.